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THE LORD'S SONG

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26 June, 1894

THE LORD'S SONG AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

FREDERICK FROTHINGHAM
=

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for
they shall see God."

CAMBRIDGE

Printed at the Riverside Press

1893

Gift of Prof. F. G. Peabody, D.D.
(212)

TO THOSE WHO KNEW AND LOVED THE AUTHOR

This little volume of sermons

IS DEDICATED BY

THE COMPILER.

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THE LORD'S SONG.

THE LORD'S SONG.¹

"How shall we sing the Lord's, song in a strange land?"
Ps. cxxxvii. 4.

THE Lord's song! the song which in His "still small voice" the glorious God himself is ever singing. He sings it in the music of the spheres, in all the wondrous, harmonious movement of many-voiced Nature; and oh! how rapturously sweet and mighty is it as heard in the quiet recesses of the soul attuned to hear it. Our text suggests it, but speaks of another "Lord's song" which human lips and hearts may sing. It too is a great and wondrous song, — the highest, mightiest, gladdest, sweetest, that man can sing, — a song into whose great melody a harmony as rich as the whole of human life is gathered. It has not merely one strain, but as many as the amplest human life can offer. It has its notes of prayer, its chants of victory. Now it rings forth as a trumpet, now

¹ This is the second of two sermons on the same text, the first of which treated more literally the expression, "In a strange land."

it pleads with yearning and pity; again it flames forth with flash of light and thunder-roll, and then it breathes its still notes of soothing and of rest; now tumultuous in hope and promise, then softly trembling with submissive faith. It breathes not only from touched lips, but from illumined countenances; not only through words, but through deeds as well; not only in still prayers, but in speaking lives; is felt as well as heard; reaches man through the eyes and the atmosphere as truly as through the ears. And its strain is immortal, singing on long after the lips and the lives that poured forth its melodies have passed into silence and into memory's shadowy realms.

Man is apt to make one mistake respecting the Lord's song in both its aspects, — the mistake suggested in the text. He is apt to think that only in special places, at special times, and in certain special ways can it be heard or sung. He is apt to think that it can be heard or sung only at the times and in the places set apart to what is called religion, — only on Sunday and in church or temple. Dreary and perilous mistake! He who cannot hear or sing that song elsewhere is not likely to hear or sing it in church or temple. And this, perhaps, is why the church and temple now mourn the scantiness of their worshipers.

That song may be heard or sung anywhere.

What is needed is simply the attuned ear and the singing heart; and that ear will hear it most clearly in apparently the most God-forsaken places, and that loving heart will sing it with most entrancing power just there where of all songs it seems the most impossible to sing, — the Lord's song *in a strange land* indeed. That it may be so sung is perhaps one of the reasons why so often we are led out of our accustomed abodes and ways into those that are strange to us, — like Israel, sometimes even, as it were, carried into captivity.

There are strange lands on our own continent, ay, within our own country, as truly as abroad. Yes, friends, there are strange lands, perhaps as strange as any that we ever visit, in our own personal experience, the experience of our private lives. A human life, as we find where it is opened to view by close contact with fellow-men, is a vaster domain by far than we are apt to think, a domain whose metes and bounds its own possessor cannot tell nor see. Not one of us knows or can guess all, or perhaps more than a small part, of what is involved in that little *ego* which he calls himself. Think you the apple-seed ever dreams of the wonder of beauty which the full-blooming tree in the springtime shall be, or of the changed and heightened splendor of the autumn boughs bending with their weight of fruit, radiant with sunset hues?

Perhaps the apple-seed is a parable speaking of what is true as well of man. What may not be true of a being who can speak the awful, infinite words, *Immortality* and *God*!

(1.) What a strange land to one who has known only health all his days is *Sickness*! How strange to exchange strength for weakness, pleasure for pain, liberty for confinement, ability for powerlessness, unconsciousness of self for self-observation, and blessed sleep, to be had for the taking, for weary wakefulness! Who knows anything about it until called to its experience? The experience has immense value to one who has not had it, especially if in its "strange land" he knows or remembers or is able to "sing the Lord's song" there.

Sickness has great revelations. It sheds new and often surprising light on both ourselves and those around us. Sometimes that light is humiliating, showing us the depths of weakness, and worse than weakness, into which it is possible for us to fall; but how divine when it reveals in us the strength that "is made perfect in weakness." Sometimes it is enchanting in the revelation it gives of sweetest and most beautiful quality, of devotion, patience, resource, and delicate cheer, in those about us in whom we had not appreciated these qualities before. But are we not tempted in

that "strange land" to cry, with captive Israel, "How shall we sing the Lord's song" there? As though there were any other song that the brave, true soul could or would sing there!

We are tempted to think that sickness releases from moral obligation. The care and watchfulness of loving service, anxious to relieve us to the uttermost, are apt to whisper that thought. We are, indeed, in sickness released from certain obligations which in health bind us. We are set free, namely, from all that is beyond our power. But from moral obligation itself we are not set free. From that we could hardly be released and remain human. Our obligation is merely changed, not repealed. We must be true to our highest there as elsewhere. Heroism, piety, unselfishness, are possible there. The Lord's song to be sung may be different there from what it is elsewhere; but essentially it is the same, and as beautiful and divine as any that man can sing. A song it is of patience, endurance, gratitude, unselfishness, trust; of consideration for those around us. How to be sick so that our illness shall be not a breaking-down to those around us, but a health and a strength in noblest wise, is the strain which the blessed Lord would have us seek in our sickness to sing.

(2.) A "strange land" indeed is that of Sorrow

to him who has known only joy. Not a happy land! Not a delightful land! And yet a land on whose stern soil the sweetest flowers of human character and virtue grow, like the forget-me-nots which I saw blooming on North Cape's giant rock. How often is it a land where one hardly sees the presence of the Lord! The Lord, however, is there — nowhere more divinely. There He opens to view the infinite deeps not only in Himself but in His creature man. And is there not most truly a Lord's song to be sung there, and for whose singing all that is sweetest, tenderest, noblest in us pleads? — a song which, though with sobbing breath and palpitating voice, sings of grateful love, of abiding memory, of prophetic hope, of sympathy embracing stricken fellow-men; of that wondrous, awful faith which looks through death and gazes on Immortality. Is not that a song divinely worth the singing? Ah! tired soul, to whom life has become trite, common, and unclean, and who longest for a new opportunity, may not such an opportunity be found here, — one which shall put thy best mettle to the proof, and the only question be, not whether the Lord's song shall be sung, but *how* it shall be sung worthily?

(3.) To one whose lot has been one of affluence, what a strange land is that of Poverty and Want! And yet it is a land which even in our favored

country many are called to tread. In these days, wherein the robber-hand is so strong and so able, so helped by the connivances and pliant forms of what is miscalled law as being blind to justice and defeating righteousness, that strange land is dangerously near to many who feel sure of never seeing it. A salt and dry and bitter land! A thirsty land whose springs are dry! A land hard to live in! Is the Lord's song possible there? Is there any voice better there than the voice of silence or the wail of misery? Let a brave soul answer of whom not long ago I heard, who, suddenly reduced from wealth to poverty, sweetly accepted the change, murmured not against Providence, expressed no bitterness toward fellow-men, but rejoiced in their joy and made their prosperity his own by his glad sympathy in their success. One such soul shows forever that a Lord's song is to be sung there. And what high and melodious strains are in that song! Does it not say, "Oh! sons of men, make not uncertain riches your trust. Worship not them as God. Make yourselves as far as may be independent of them. Especially make your children able to do without them. Be strong in yourselves. Be strong in the Lord. Teach them to be so too. Be strong and large and rich in the culture of your own power. Let your wants be simple, inexpensive, natural, wholesome.

Let your needs be the fewest. Make character noble, and thus touch the life-giving and sustaining Life of all. Do this by your children. Then, though carried away captive as Israel was, even into a land of sudden poverty and want, 'the Lord's song,' familiar before, will not need to become a stranger to your lips, but may rise from your very heart of hearts in a wonder of grace and power such as yourself, in life's most prosperous-seeming hour, have never dreamed of, — a song of trust and gratitude, of courage and hope, of the soul triumphant over mortal sense, a vision and a cheer to you, a strength to others." "Though men may forget the singer, they will not forget the song." And for yourself, like the once powerful, in Browning's poem, a melon-seller now become, instead of weakly and wastefully deploring the lost good, you shall rejoice in having had it and the experience of its opportunity.

(4.) Of all strange lands almost the strangest seems to be that which in these days most men seem most to long for and press towards with most eager and swiftest feet, — that, namely, into which they pass in going from poverty to wealth. How anxious is the hunt after sudden wealth, — one of the most dangerous and hurtful of gifts that could be given. If instead of praying "From sudden death, good Lord, deliver us," the Episcopal litany

asked deliverance from sudden *riches*, it would offer a wise and timely prayer. And yet how many who hear me now believe what I am saying? Nevertheless, it is sober truth. The slow-gotten wealth is the best wealth, the wealth that answers to and expresses honest toil, vigorous thought, patient waiting, energy, and skill. It brings the strength of brain and brawn that can bear and use it. Sudden wealth how often brings madness, feebleness, folly, if it be not the expression of dishonor; upsets the mind, where it does not debauch the character. Of selfish prayers, he framed one of the wisest who said, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." One of the commonest of mistakes is the belief that the experience of wealth is especially that from which the Lord's song would rise in noblest melody and with irrepressible power. Yet, in fact, in that strange land, that captivating land, how often it occurs that *no* Lord's song is heard at all, that the Lord's song seems the very hardest, the most impossible to sing. Not from the lips of abundance rise the gladdest, strongest strains of gratitude and praise; rather in strangely varied forms of complaining, the dreary question, "How shall the Lord's song be sung in a strange land?" This seems most strange — and yet there are reasons for it, reasons well worth pondering, reasons which a people like our own, in a money-

seeking and money-worshipping age, may well take to heart.

There *is*, however, a Lord's song to be sung in even the strange land of most sudden wealth, — a song of glorious beauty and most benignant praise. And it is peculiar in this, — that it cannot be a solitary song. Though one voice raise it, straightway it breaks into a chorus, because so many other voices take up and carry on its strain, — the voices of those to whom that wealth brings blessing. Yes, that chorus may quite overpower the solitary voice. For into *its* strain must almost inevitably come thoughts so grave — thoughts of duty and responsibility, that the wealth given may be well and wisely used, not squandered and not selfishly kept, to rise up hereafter in dread judgment against its possessor — that the solitary song shall change from triumph into prayer, from joy into humility, from content into aspiration, and become a deep, yearning cry unto the Lord for wisdom and for guidance, a cry that shall be music indeed in the ears of the Infinite Father.

(5.) What a strange land is Age to us, when first we find that it is at hand! To feel still young, but to recognize that —

“It is time to be old,
To take in sail;”

to find that the body which has faithfully served us gives warning that it must ere long quit our service and go unto its rest, — strange indeed! We cannot understand it, nor at first even find our way in this unfamiliar land. Not a welcome land! To find ourselves more and more alone, the old faces vanishing, dear voices passing into silence, and weakness, inability, and neglect taking the place of the full life and society of younger days. How to sing the Lord's song there! How to sing it so as to —

“Economize the falling river,
And not less revere the Giver!”

How to sing it so that instead of a sad and dreary, a selfish and querulous, it shall become a beautiful and helpful experience! How to sing it so that it shall be the silvery crown of virtuous living! How to sing it so that it shall bear to hearing ears the high testimonies which are within the privilege of Age alone! For it is to be sung there — a song of noblest strain: within it is the fullness of life's experience and knowledge, the culmination of life's opportunity as well as the trembling of life's hope. It may be sung so as, through the very presence of decay and death, to declare the triumph of life and immortality.

The Lord's song! It may be sung everywhere. To no experience in life need it be a stranger.

And oh ! its blessing may be sweetest and strongest in that very "strange land" where it is hardest to sing. Shall we not remember that it is to be sung? Shall we not seek to sing it? Thus shall we not merely give God the noblest praise, but also give fellow-men the divinest service, and for ourselves reach forth unto the highest — that highest the good of all.

A beautiful little poem of Mrs. Browning's runs thus : —

"Said a people to a poet : 'Go out from among us straightway !

While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of divine.

There's a little fair brown nightingale who, sitting in the gateway,

Makes fitter music to our ear than any song of thine !'

"The poet went out weeping ; the nightingale ceased chanting.

'Now wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweetness done ?'

'I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet wanting,

Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under sun.'

"The poet went out weeping — and died abroad, bereft there.

The bird flew to his grave and died amid a thousand wails. And when I last came by the place, I swear the music left there

Was only of the poet's song and not the nightingale's."

**TERRIBLE THINGS IN RIGHTEOUS-
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TERRIBLE THINGS IN RIGHTEOUS- NESS.

“By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us,
O God of our salvation.” — Ps. lxxv. 5.

THESE remarkable words touch the dark side of life. They touch it to throw light on it. They recognize all its sternness and give an interpretation of at least a part of it in such virile fashion as to bespeak a stout heart and inspire a robust and healthy faith. They are good for a time so morally sick and flabby as ours. They present a hemisphere of the truth. To round it to a sphere and thus complete the truth, we should have to add: “By *glorious* things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us, O God of our salvation.” By keeping this bright hemisphere of the truth well in mind we shall best be fitted to enter wholesomely into the full meaning and power of the dark one presented in the text.

A modern poet has well said, “Life is not slumber on a bed of down.” Such downy slumber as life may know is sometimes rudely broken by

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experiences so severe that they may not inaptly be called "terrible." The first point that the text suggests in regard to them is, that they are not accidental and not arbitrary. So far from that, they come as links in that great chain of cause and effect which so mightily works to bind the universe together, and to make advancing and progressive life possible. A *chain* I have called it, but, more and greater far, it is a foundation strong and sure, on which man may not only calmly stand, but securely build and do his part toward making both Present and Future greater and perhaps better than the Past.

But what is most original and impressive in the text is the assertion that these things come as the righteous answer to human prayer. Who thinks of that when for him their great sober hour has struck, and their weight challenges his patience and strength to bravely bear it? Do they indeed come in righteousness? Easy to answer Yes, when we have not to bear them, but simply to look on as spectators. In our calm clear atmosphere we can see clearly enough then that such things were inevitable and were carefully invited and prepared for, and in so far were really the prayer of those who now groan beneath them. But when *we* have to suffer, we may not always be ready to call righteous the terrible things that answer the prayer

of our past living. We may allow that they were inevitable; but, ah! were they righteous? It is a tremendous question to ask in connection with the sore, heavy troubles that sometimes we have to face, and as results of our own misconduct. A Milton may essay to "justify the ways of God to men;" but for me a far lowlier task is the only fit one. I would not dare in any case to *prove* the righteousness of the terrible things that come to man in answer to his prayer; rather would I invite myself and you and whoever writhes beneath the long and bitter anguish of suffering to *trust* in its righteousness. This invites to the great source of strength and comfort even for him who most deeply needs their benediction.

Is there not a comfort of the noblest in the thought that in righteousness God's terrors come to us — and not by chance, not arbitrarily, not in cruelty, anger, hate, vindictiveness; — in righteousness, and so are compatible with the divinest tenderness and love? And the Trust I speak of has its own strong foundation for even the mind that cannot yet see its clear way to the Love of God — that foundation the thought that in the very nature of things it is impossible that the results of good and evil, obedience and willfulness, should be the same. To have them the same would breed confusion and anarchy, never an ordered

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world. It would make man's endeavor hopeless and progress an impossibility. So far it becomes plain that it is righteous that "terrible things" should answer the prayer which seeks for terrible things — even when they who offer that prayer know not what they ask. How much more when they are clearly warned, how much more when they know what results are surely involved in the courses which they follow and which are their effectual *living* prayer.

The most of us have seen at least one of God's "terrible things" on a vast scale — so vast that not a few thought it never could nor would come : I mean that great and terrible war whose thunders shook our country to her foundation. Did not it come in answer to the nation's dreary prayer for material prosperity, which, through a long course of darker-growing years, so let slavery grow, that at last the "peculiar institution" reached the point at which it must rule or ruin? That it was an answer in righteousness who can question who remembers Jefferson's prophetic word, spoken so long before the first gun was fired at Sumter: "I tremble for my country when I remember that God is just?"

We saw another "terrible thing" on that startling day when in the streets of Chicago policemen were blown to death by bombs fired by men boast-

ing themselves of the name of Anarchy — the one name which means destruction to order, to society, and to the hope of progress, and a return to Chaos. And this in our own country, which has prided herself on being the seat of Freedom and the home of the oppressed. Did not this come as one clear result of that carelessness as to who sought refuge on our soil, which came of our haste to be rich, recking not who came, so that they might help us to make money?

Yet another grim terror is coming nearer with each advancing year. It shows itself in cloudburst and tornado, in vast and terrible droughts, and now in devastating fires — the smoke of one of which this very year¹ arrested the whole trade of the river St. Lawrence for days, while the daily papers bore reports of others elsewhere. And these are but the “beginning of sorrows” — only the forerunners of far more “terrible things” — the natural and inevitable results of the reckless destruction of the forests now going on. And the nation which alone can arrest the evil lets its thought go in the wake of political tricksters scheming for power and money-seekers eager for advantage, both careless what becomes of the nation’s welfare. What a sorrowful prayer for a nation, delivered as ours has been, to put up to

¹ 1887.

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Almighty God, the God of its salvation! Can a just God answer such by aught but "terrible things?"

These are conspicuous instances on the large field of public life, where all may see them and mark their significance. But oh! friends, illustrations quite as signal may be found in the smaller realms of personal and private life. All men in their secret hearts desire what is good. But alas! not all men desire it enough to make it their life's prayer. Perhaps they will pray for it in words — on Sunday, or at the beginning or the close of the day — but in all their week's praying else, in the prayer of labor and of deeds, they ask for what is evil. The evil for the moment is pleasanter and easier;

" And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song,"

until the fruitage hour in which the result becomes clear. Ah! that result — in how many forms it brings its sober teaching! Here typhoid fever comes, to tell us how we have been invoking the powers of mischief through our neglect of the plainest and simplest laws of health; here misshapen bodies, through dreary years bearing a cruel burden of weariness and woe, because we would worship at the altar of a foolish and wicked fashion, and so prayed against the freedom, grace, ease, and ability of body offered us by generous

nature ; here sudden eclipses, darkening at midday lives whose early promise was bright with auspicious hopes, because the prayer of those lives was for what forbade the steady growth of manful power ; here wretchedness and suffering, if not manifold sin, running through long spaces of this short earthly life, because Mammon was worshiped instead of a pure modest love.

But, indeed, the time and your patience might be exhausted in the naming of the "terrible things" which come into individual human lives through evil eating and drinking, dress and talk, marriage and amusement, labor and scheming ; and in which men pray against their own and others' welfare, ay, against the happiness and well-being of the very children whom they think they love better than themselves, but whom they do not love well enough to take the trouble, the self-denying trouble, of training into health and godliness.

Most true, O friends, it is — would that we could and would take its stern, strong teaching home ! — that in God's providence "terrible things" do come to man. As true, however strange it seem, that they come "in righteousness," because it is fit and right that they should come. As true again, that not from afar they come, like burning arrows darting through hostile spaces and fired by hidden and malignant foes, but in closest connection with

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our own human life, the answer just to the real prayer which that life is offering. If this be so, does it not behoove us well to see what petition our life is putting up for ourselves and our children, for our country and for man? Oh! hard and dark and cruel and selfish prayers enough one can easily see in any day's newspaper, in national policies, in church activities, in the conduct and speech and ways of men. Oh! to see to it, that desiring bread, we ask not God for a stone; or fish, that we pray not sturdily for a brood of vipers!

Does the train of thought thus suggested arouse feelings of gloom and dread, and throw a shadow over the brightness of life? I would then ask, "Is it a whit more sombre than the *facts* of life?" Of enormous consequence to our own and our children's well-being to look these squarely in the face and take their full measure, that we may learn that life is really a serious thing and not a joke, a great strong problem for strong and earnest men's solving. And then I would invite you to enter with me into the magnificent, culminating thought of our text. Enter with me, as Jesus and his disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration entered into the cloud. Confess its darkness and its mystery. Then behold its inner glory and hear the blessed voice of the Father. These things, terrible though they be, come not only in righteousness, nor only

in answer to our own prayer ; but they come "from the God of our salvation." Note well the superb word. It is not the God of wrath. It is not the God of vengeance and of doom. It is not the God of retributive justice merely, commending the poisoned chalice of our folly and sin to our own lips. Higher, dearer, better far, — augustly, severely, and oh ! how tenderly beautiful, — it is the "God of our *salvation*." Of *our* salvation, not of this man's or that, not of any selected few, not of the privileged and the good merely, but of all. Not Hebrews alone may say the blessed word. Mohammedans, Buddhists, Parsees, Christians, may say it too. "Terrible things" will come so long as men persist in praying for them. God may not be mocked. What man soweth he shall reap. But they shall come for man's own sake. They shall come to enlighten him, to make him wise, to rebuke his foolish pride, to teach and train him into patience and humility, to set him free from all base thrall, to teach him the difference between evil and good, and how divinely worth having goodness is, even the pearl of inestimable price. They shall come to lead him to the glorious gates of the immortal life.

"The God of our salvation !" How blessedly this thought lights up even the dark side of life ! What a superb theology it presents even there !

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It states the whole magnificent truth. It says that "by terrible things" man's evil prayers shall in righteousness be answered. But that answer shall not be, as a dreadful theology teaches, a lost and ruined world. It shall not be that of that lost and ruined world salvation shall be the possibility of only a part. It shall be that those "terrible things" shall prove to be the ministers of the God of "our salvation," — of the salvation of all men, those especially who are in deepest need and sorest danger — the danger of giving themselves up for lost, the need of one to save them from despair. These saved, most truly shall all be saved. And there shall be no terror in life without its proper bound.

Let us take the great teaching of our text home. Let us round it out by that other word, unwritten save as we write it, "*By glorious things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us, O God of our salvation.*" Then shall we indeed be in position to sing "the Lord's song" in even the dreariest "strange land" that life may offer us, God's grace being sufficient for us, his strength perfected in our weakness.

JESUS AND JOHN.

JESUS AND JOHN.

"Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist ; notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." — MATT. xi. 11.

LET us not go too far nor into doubtful quarters for the true interpretation of these extraordinary words. They are born of the very spirit of truth and reverence. They are meant, on the one hand, to say that John the Baptist belongs in the rank of the highest men. That is high appreciation ; perhaps it is higher than we, recalling the thought of the supreme worthies of ancient days in Palestine and Greece, would of ourselves, apart from the authority of Jesus, accord him. They mean, on the other hand, taking him at this high estimate, to set forth by contrast with his lofty nobleness the grandeur of a higher than John — a higher than any one soul, even that divine kingdom whose lowly servant and ambassador Jesus held it as his honor to be, as it was John's to be its forerunner and herald. Does he mean liter-

ally to say that John was less great than the least in that kingdom? Perhaps not; for though our common version so gives it, the revised New Testament puts it more mildly, saying, "He is but little in the kingdom of heaven," or one "of the lesser" ones in that kingdom is greater than he. And yet, once we clearly see the central truth and force of Jesus' thought, I suspect we shall feel that the sharp dramatic rendering of our common version does not overstate the truth. And thus it gives us John in all his greatness, Jesus in the new nobleness of a loyalty to truth which would even dare expose himself to misconception, and the kingdom of heaven receiving new illumination from both.

The key to the explanation is, I suppose, to be found in the messages of Jesus and of John. How different, how unlike they are! How fresh, bright, original, and profound, how comforting and life-giving the message of Jesus! In its deep mines of thought and life men delve as eagerly as when Jesus gave it. Can the same be said of John's? Strong, true, good, it had been spoken by prophets before him, and it waited for a higher to complete and fulfill it. Compare Jesus' "Peace I give unto you" and "I will give you rest" with John's "Repent, the axe is laid at the root of the tree," — and you will see the enormous difference.

This difference between their messages came from the difference between themselves. That difference is not intellectual. Both are of commanding force, but Jesus is of a far fresher originality. Nor is it moral. Both, so far as their story tells, are without a stain, both devoted and daring preachers of righteousness, to which they bear testimony with their blood. That difference let me, for want of a better word, call *spiritual* — as it reaches down into the central life, perhaps the make of each. It is not a difference of antagonism. In spirit they are inseparably one. Nor is it wholly a difference of more and less. And yet it is so great that although we could conceive of John's disappearing from the world's history and no essential element being lost, who would dare to say that Jesus could be spared? We might liken it to the difference between the glimmering night, in which man can walk at best with unsure steps, and the bright, joyous, strong, life-giving day, in which man can work and run and leap, and which itself is security and power. The glimmering night is good; but what is it to the day? Does not the day give it its best meaning? Is it not the day's sober, silent, star-gemmed handmaid? It is Forerunner, preparing for the kingdom of the light, the kingdom of the day.

What, now, was the essential difference between

Jesus and John? Get that and you get the difference between John and the least in the kingdom of heaven. Was it not largely this? John looked outside of himself for the kingdom and him who should bring it; Jesus looked within himself both for it and for its bringer. Looking within, he made that most thrilling, awful, original, momentous of discoveries, — God: God within him, God with him, God good, God love, God the Father, life of his life, inseparable from him. Is it wonder that he should be absorbed in that discovery; that he should feel, in its divine fascination, that “himself from God he could not free,” — that he and the Father were and forever must be One, bound together by a chain which, even if he would; he could not break, — and hence the one chief thing for him was to purify himself that God might the more utterly possess him and pass through him to others?

Finding God in himself, Jesus found Him everywhere; wherever he went God was there. Finding Him there, he saw Him especially in every other soul — but, oh! how little recognized. This vast discovery and its amazing gift of good could not be for himself alone. It was too great for any *one*; it belonged to others; it could be only for *all*. He could not but feel “For others grows in me the noble good.” Being for others, it must be commu-

nicable to others ; not mainly through agencies of his contriving, but chiefly by letting it have its own way and go forth to others as it would, his duty to it being simply that he should oppose no hindrance to its flow and surrender himself wholly to its service. Hence he said, "I purify myself." Making this supreme surrender, finding himself increasingly God possessed, and having divine gifts for men, is it strange that he should say, "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly"? Bringing the bread of life, pointing out the way of life, is it strange that in the fashion of Eastern speech he should say, "I am the bread of life," "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. He that eateth me shall live by me"? In the sense of his glorious vision of a loving and life-giving God, he could say, "He that hath seen me"—that is, who enters into my thought and sense of God—"hath seen the Father." Was it wonder that he should say, in the strength of such thoughts: "Peace I give unto you," "Come to me, ye weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls," "I and the Father are one," and that amazing beatitude, divinest of all the holy number, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"?

Mark well these words and their like, which

make the message that Jesus gave. Are not they, and such as they, the words that humanity the most sorely needs—as sorely to-day as when Jesus spoke them? Every heart that aches for peace needs them; every weary one crying “We’re tired, so tired, my heart and I,” needs them; every soul weighed down by a heavy sense of weakness needs them; who, indeed, does *not* need them that he may bravely bear and do his part on the stage of life? He who spoke them flashed life electric into the souls of men. Mark them well. They are forms of one spirit, the spirit of *divine* power; the spirit which puts into men the very power they deepest need—soul power, the power that overcomes evil and sin, neutralizes weakness and sadness, weariness and paralysis, and the drear sense of failure and loss, and substitutes for them their glad inspiring opposites, thus making the lame to walk, the sorrowing to sing for joy, the darkened to live in light, the dead to rise into newness of life.

The kingdom of heaven is that of this soul-and-life-renewing power. It brings this unspeakable gift to man. It reveals its presence in man, by divine electric touch arousing it into life. Its children are the sons and heirs of this power. It comes into them. It issues from them. In it they become centres whence flows to others the

ever-new life of God, even the least of them giving this divine service to the world.

Thus it was with Jesus. How was it with John? He had the divine life in him. It made him the superb character that he was. But how little he recognized it! Perhaps he dared not look within. Perhaps he feared to meet the *dread* power there of which his stern message spoke to men. Not recognizing the God presence in himself, he failed to recognize it in others, even in Jesus. Not recognizing it, he could not fully give it; nor did he pretend to. His own eyes, not filled with its light, could not flash its vision into others' eyes. He looked elsewhere for it—and led others to do the same—where it could not be found. Looking away from himself for it, his disciples also looked elsewhere for it, and he and they could put to Jesus the pathetic question, “Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?” That law is true which Schiller voices in an immortal poem:—

“It is not without thee ; there seeks it the fool.

It is *in* thee thou bringest it ever forth.”

Look from John's disciples to those of Christ. Seeing the divine presence in *him*, they saw that it had come into human life. Receiving it from *him*, they found that it had come in themselves. It had come to stay ; no earthly power could take

it from them ; it was theirs, to go whither they went, to stay where they dwelt, to interpret, inspire, and renew life for them. Yea more, it was to go forth from them, the most communicable of gifts, which they could not, any more than they would, keep to themselves — which it were sin to keep from other souls. Men hungered for it, and were ready to receive it. So, charged with blessed power, — the very power which a sad, doubting, weary, despairing time needed, — they became Christ's, each in his or her own place a Christ ; Christ within each one "the hope of glory," "the power of an endless life." Hear Paul as he grandly voices it: "I am crucified with Christ ; notwithstanding I live. And yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." What a wondrous consciousness ! And it belonged in its measure to even the least that entered into the life of Christ, and brought its great new birth to a dying world.

Compare its message from the lips of even the least who received it with that of John. John's was the great message of repentance, strong, stern, true, — true wherever there is human sin. But its sanctions were "the terrors of the Lord," — the axe at the root of the tree, the fan to purge, the fire to burn. Terrific, truly ; but what hope, what cheer, what new life there ? But the message of even the least who had found the Christ

and felt the thrill of the new life glowing within — how different! “Come, we have found the Christ. The divine power is here — in us, and to be in you. Repent, put away your sin, for the strength of a new life has come, and it only waits to fill and make you over in its likeness. No axe to hew, no fire to burn, no fan to blow away, but a divine presence in the soul, to stay there, to grow there, to make all sweet and strong and clean and glad, and to build up into glorious beauty and greatness power and peace and blessedness.”

John’s message would seem to imply that the kingdom could come by the destruction of the wicked, and justice and brotherhood be established by force. How many even of the churches join with Islam in thinking so to-day? But the message of even the least who entered into the spirit of Christ implied an evangel which should “seek and save that which was lost,” and thus set man on the divinest of endeavors, — that which seeks the Holy Grail in every human soul, and aims to bring even the worst, —

“In darkness lost,
The darkness of the grave,”

into the blessed life of a new humanity. Within the other lay despair for many, — within this hope for all; within the other a failing life, — within this a new world.

Now, friends, is it not too plain for argument that he who in smallest measure enters into this is greater than John? Not *better*, mind you, but *greater*, a far higher human efficiency. For he has gotten hold of and can communicate the awful divine secret—verily the “secret of the Lord.” He has entered into the supreme value, supreme for others as for himself. He can give them the highest word that man can speak, the word of life, the very word needed by struggling, weary, perplexed, longing souls of fellow-men. No matter how humble, though a menial, a slave, a prisoner in chains, a Stephen getting stoned to death, he has it in him, and he gives it as he goes. He can do without a visible Christ, for he carries the invisible Christ within him, to make manifest anew to men. In his uttermost littleness he may be like one of those tiny safety matches which seem to be only harmless bits of wood; but let them strike what they are meant to touch, and lo! the creative word again is spoken, “Light, be!” and light is. He may touch a great groping soul,—a Paul, a Luther,—and that soul flashes up, and lo! the reformation of the world. But he is surer to touch lowly and obscure souls—souls that suffer and that need; and to them come from that touch the sweetness and peace and love that are how sorely needed in the humblest conditions of our

earthly life. Renew them, and lo! a new-created world.

Friends, is there nothing here of moment for us? The question of the difference between Jesus and John has bearings vital. Shall we take them to ourselves? Says Martineau, "Where is *our* God? You say He is everywhere: then show me anywhere that you have met Him. You declare Him everlasting: then tell me any moment that he has been with you." The world waits "for the manifestation of the sons of God." The world waits sadly, wearily. But ah! do not our own homes wait — our neighborhoods — the society in which we live — the poor and stricken about us? Oh! where is our God? What God in us do others see? God, our God, is in us. If not in us we shall hardly find Him outside of us. Oh! to recognize, to accept, to surrender ourselves wholly to, the true God, the Heavenly Father, and so enter into his peace and give forth his blessed life!

MILTON, *November 24, 1888.*

WHAT IS THAT TO THEE?

WHAT IS THAT TO THEE?

"What is that to thee? Follow thou me." — JOHN xxi.
22.

HERE is a question for dangerously tempted hours, and with it advice of lasting value: the question, "What is that to thee?" the counsel, "Follow thou me." In the narrative Jesus puts the question and gives the caution to Peter. But he does more: he gives the question to Peter to ask of himself in many a following hour, and entrusts the caution to Peter's own conscience to repeat. He does yet more: even sending the question forth to countless other souls, among them yours and mine, to ask it of ourselves, and lays it on each conscience to say with a Christ-voice, "Follow thou me."

It is one of the wonders of man's constitution that he can hold converse with himself. He can debate, reason, plead with himself. He can approve, blame, command, persuade himself. He can move himself to the better or abandon himself to the worse, as though in his one personality a

group of personalities were gathered — some good, some bad, some high, some low, some wise, and others foolish ; as though he were a whole congress in himself and his inner life a drama. This mighty fact lends force to a question such as that before us — a question which sets a man squarely face to face with himself in the presence, on the one hand, of alluring danger, on the other, of divinely commanding duty.

Jesus asked the question of Peter. The story of the Temptation shows how sublimely he had long before asked it of himself. Perhaps he saw or feared in Peter a tendency to pry into or meddle with what was no proper concern of his, and to arrest that weakness, which might seriously harm him, did him the true friend's service of directing him *from* his peril *to* his duty. He made himself, as it were, an outer conscience to summon Peter unto his own plain fidelity — a noble service, however curt and severe the words which clothed it may seem. So *we* may put the question before others, provided we do so in a simple desire for their good. We may become a faithful outer conscience to fellow-men. Where need is, then, let us promptly do it. But my present point is, to accent the question before us and the counsel joined with it, as to be addressed by ourselves to ourselves — as a matter exclusively

between ourselves and ourselves. Let me do so through a few illustrations.

1. The context suggests curiosity as a direction in which danger may lie. Innocent and harmless though it may seem, curiosity may be fraught with danger — to honor, to happiness, to health, to the rights and welfare of fellow-men. Jesus' sharp rebuke to Peter indicates his sense of that danger. It says impressively, "Beware of prying into what is none of your business, whether it be what you are forbidden to know, or what you cannot with just consideration for others know." I heard of a man in spirit-rapping days who inquired of the spirits how long he had to live. Foolish, shall I say *wicked*, question! The answer was, "Two years." He began to die at once. There are family secrets, business secrets, personal secrets. Regard for others' rights and feelings — nay, good breeding — would sacredly refrain from looking at such even if they chanced to lie open before it — would cover them up rather. And yet some seem not to know better than to pry into just such sanctities as these. Dangerous business that is, as well as dishonest; and not merely because of the harm of it, not only because "listeners" proverbially "hear no good of themselves," but because they sometimes get hold of what burns worst the hand that tries to filch it, like the deadly electric

wire which cannot be relinquished by the hand that touches it, but burns to death. Tennyson well says of knowledge, —

“But on her forehead sits a fire.”

Are *we* ever tempted to such a curiosity? Does it offer attractions hard to resist? Then let us turn sharply on ourselves and say, “What is that to thee?” and then list to the sacred voice which says, “Follow thou me.” Thus shall we come unto all the truth that it serves man to know.

2. Another temptation lies in the direction of money. Others' money may be in our charge. We may be in a position of trust. We may have the opportunity of appropriating to our own use the money in our care, or of so using it as to build our own fortunes without direct peculation, and may be in a position to conceal our unfaithfulness. How much we hear of this nowadays! Here a treasurer, there a director, here a trustee, there a bank president or cashier, yields to the temptation, and, thinking to buy or win concealment, gets at last exposure. Judging from the kind of men whom it ensnares, the temptation is a terrible one. Sometimes it offers enormous advantages, among them the means of buying off exposure or of defeating justice. All the more, if any such comes nigh us, do we need to guard against it. Especially do

we need to do this if it offer the sure success of placing the reward of unfaithfulness in our hand at once. Then, oh! then, say promptly, sternly to thyself, "What is that to thee?" There is big meaning in the question. What can the money be, though it amount to millions, as compared to *thee*? Thy temporary gain — thy eternal loss; — to drop from thee certainly at death, leaving thee — what? Comfort, peace, joy? or dishonor and remorse? And though no other man know, *thou* knowest. And *thou* remainest.

"Thy soul and God stand sure.

What entered into thee

Was, is, and shall be."

Ah! is it not of supreme moment that what enters into thee shall be such as thou shalt not fear or shame to keep and carry anywhere, into any company, such as shall not be a clinging Nessus-shirt of disgrace and remorse, which thou canst neither bear nor tear away? Oh! hearken then to Jesus' word, "Follow thou me," — at its sternest, tender, compared with the Tempter's voice, and calling thee certainly to self-respect, honor, peace.

3. Again, some one has wronged thee — bitterly, wantonly, it may be. Thou hast tried to get the wrong righted, but no sign of regret or redress appears. Thou must accept it and take thy stand. Perhaps thou art in the wrong-doer's power.

Thou art tempted to revenge. Or perhaps thou art not in his power, but he is in thine, and the opportunity is thine of paying him back in his own coin. What wilt thou do? Perhaps a voice whispers, as I once heard a minister contend, that thou hast a right to wrong the man who wrongs thee; — as though two wrongs could make a right! Perhaps another whispers, “If thou strike not back, thou art not a man of spirit, but a milksop.” Or perhaps it says, “Where’s the use of giving good for evil? It will not be appreciated, and will be charged to bad motive or motive other than the true. And then what good will it do?” Or perhaps thou cravest the sweets of revenge. If it be so, beware! Say unto thyself, “What is that to thee?” Ah! it is much to thee what answer thou makest suggestions like these. Thou blamest the wrong; wilt thou double it by repeating it? Or wilt thou arrest it by a barricade of good. Arrest it with good, it goes no farther, it stands condemned with the heaviest condemnation thou canst pronounce on it.

“What is that to thee,” that thy brother hath wronged thee? He hath wronged not thee, — thou alone canst do that, — but he hath wronged himself. Say not then that thou art tempted of Satan, but more divinely say that God is there, trying thee, that thou and others may see what

stuff thou art of and how thou bearest thyself on the battlefield of life. Leave the wrong to itself as utterly as though it did not exist. Keep thine own straight way, thy integrity whole, thy temper sweet, thy garments unsoiled, thy affections pure. So shall the wrong die and thou shalt keep thy soul alive.

4. Thou art in a post of service. But thou art not happy, for thou art not justly paid. Thy employer is hard and close, taking advantage of thy necessity. The tempter comes and says, "Give poor service. Give the least and do the worst thou canst. Take advantage of thy employer in every hidden way, and so be even with him!" Take care! Consider well! Say to thyself, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." Because he is mean, wilt thou be mean? Because he is dishonest, wilt thou be a rogue? *Even* with him? Despising and condemning his course, wilt thou be nothing more than *even* with him? Didst thou agree to give bad service? Wilt thou ever agree to do dishonest service? If he knows no better, pity him: *thou* knowest better,—do not imitate him. As thou carest for thyself, do thy best. Let thy work and thee be good friends. Let thy faithfulness rebuke thy employer's injustice. Who knows that thou mayst not save thy brother? At all events, thou savest thyself unto

others as well as to thyself. So hear the blessed, "Follow thou me."

5. Again, others have immense influence over us. Well that they should. But oft that influence is not good. Too often we let them be our conscience, when we should listen to our own. We silence its voice by the question, "What will people say?" or "Why should not I do as others do?" How many young lives have been blasted through this very influence, giving themselves to drink, evil dress, bad fashions, etc., because others do so! Oh! "What is that to thee?" Let others go their way: the divine voice says, "Follow thou me." Hear Auerbach: "Man has the single and prime duty of preserving the repose of his mind. All that is external to him, that terrible, 'What will people say,' has no business to concern him. This question makes the mind homeless. Do right and fear no one. Thou mayst be sure that, with all thy consideration for the world, thou wilt never satisfy the world. . . . He who allows himself to alter his sentiments and permits the essence of his character to be changed is conquered and killed by the world, and exists no longer as himself. . . . But if thou goest forward straight on thy way, not concerning thyself with the friendly or unfriendly glances of men, then thou hast conquered the world and it is subject to thee." Oh! remember that

"Thou art called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

6. A not uncommon obstacle to right living lies in the question, "What does it amount to anyway? I am nobody; what cares the world for me? I can't change it, or even make a ripple on its surface? Duty I find hard, and I don't like it; there is no end to it." Well, suppose it so: "What is that to thee?" Ask this of thyself until thy better being awakes and is ready to answer. Is, indeed, all that nothing to thee? Art thou nothing to thyself? If thou canst do no good, canst thou do no harm? If thou canst not bless, canst not thou curse? If thou dost not know, canst not thou learn, and perhaps learn to honor and love what now thou despisest and hatest? If thou canst not change the world, canst thou not thyself? That precious self of thine, thy jewel of price, wilt thou set it in a frame of selfishness, cowardice, baseness? Thy living soul wilt thou chain to a dead and noisome body of shame, unfaithfulness, remorse? Who would dare take the responsibility of largely changing the courses of the world? No, better as it is. Rejoice in thy modest lot. Obey that "Follow thou me" which shall make it beautiful with a flower's loveliness. Fear not; thy time will come. What joy there was when the

moons of Mars came into human view! For unknown centuries they had waited for that moment, unnoted and unseen. But quietly they kept on their silent shining, till the moment came when man's eye beheld them and recognized them as members of the starry host. But all the while they *had been* members of the starry host. Is it not something to thee that, whether little or great, thou belongest in the ranks of heaven or those of darkness? Two at least there are who know which, — thyself, from whom thou canst never tear thyself, and God.

7. I once received a letter on which the post-office had failed to cancel the stamp. There was the good stamp. Morally it was dead, practically it was valid. *My* duty was clear — to destroy it. A horse-car conductor fails to take my fare. If I take the ride, it is my duty to go and pay him.

But another voice says, No, it is the post official's business to cancel the stamp, the conductor's to collect the fare. True, but not to the point. What their business is, "What is that to thee?" The question for thee is, What is *thy* business? To that, "Follow thou me" says the divine voice. Thy business is not only to be honest thyself and not to take what thou dost not pay for, but to help thy brother — the post officer, on the one hand, the conductor, on the other — to do his

duty, making good his mistake if he meant no wrong, and stopping his wrong if he meant evil, and thus, so far as thou canst, to save their employers from being wronged. A small matter, say you? Yes, but a great principle involved in it. "Follow thou me."

8. Once more. Life is hard to thee. Thou art troubled, distressed, desolate. Men are hard and cold toward thee. Misfortune and failure dog thy steps. Ill health is thy portion, which thou knowest not how to remove. Evil seems to answer thy good. God seems far away and silent. Evil men flourish and look happy. It all seems unjust and wrong — as though God were not, and Christ amounted to nothing, and immortal life were a dream. Art thou tempted to doubt, denial, and the giving up of every worthy aim? Oh! brother, sister, let not me, but thy own soul, say to thee, "What is that to thee?" For all that ill and wrong that thou seest thou art not responsible. Thou madest it not — let it be. But to thy own self and for thyself thou *art* responsible. Dost thou see a nobler possibility? Oh! hear its tender, mighty voice saying, as from the lips of Christ, "Follow thou me." What is following worth, if it be not through the dark, the thicket, the jungle, as well as over the sunny plains of life? The leader is for our following where of ourselves we

should not know the way. Oh! take to thyself the spirit of Matthew Arnold's great word : —

“ Long fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
 How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare !
 ‘ Christ,’ some one says, ‘ was human as we are.
 No judge eyes us from heaven our sin to scan,
 We live no more, when we have done our span.’
 ‘ Well, then, for Christ,’ thou answerest, ‘ who can care ?
 From sin which heaven records not, why forbear ?
 Live we like brutes our life without a plan.’
 So answerest thou ; but why not rather say,
 ‘ Hath man no second life ? *Pitch this one high.*
 Sits there no judge in heaven our sin to see ?
 More strictly, then, the inward judge obey.
 Was Christ a man like us ? Ah ! let us try
 If we then, too, can be such men as he ! ’ ”

Through what I have been trying to say, have you, dear friends, been detecting the tones of the voice of Duty ? Another voice is also there, did we but hear it, — a voice whose charm we all delight in, — the voice of Beauty. Hard though it seems to follow the best, the sternness of its labor has a wondrous way of melting into loveliness, its battle dies away into peace, its tears flash into joy, its present loss becomes eternal gain : —

“ The path of Duty (is) the way to glory.
 He that, ever following her commands,
 On, with toil of heart and knees and hands,
 Through the long gorge to the far light has won

His path upward and prevailed,
Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
Are close upon the shining table-lands
Of which our God himself is moon and sun."

MILTON, *February 9, 1889.*

GOODNESS TO BE PAID FOR.

GOODNESS TO BE PAID FOR.

“Lovest thou me more than these?” — JOHN xxi. 15.

DOES the question of the text refer to the other disciples or to *things*, such as the food and drink before them? Most critics say the former. Lücke suggests that it is ridiculous to think anything else. And yet exactly this so-called ridiculous question is the one that faces you and me every day, when God, Righteousness, Truth, Love, Wisdom, each of the higher things asks us, “Lovest thou [me more than these,” — lower things, bread, money, power, etc., — and gets, alas! how often an answer anything but creditable.

Last Sunday I put the question, “Who will consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?” To-day I want to look at a point connected with this, which perhaps sorely puzzles most of us, namely, the difficulty of being good. As the result of our looking at it, I expect to present a doctrine which I find myself driven to by the teaching of life — a doctrine which, in my boyhood, when from Sunday to Sunday I reverently looked up to

the preacher for words of life, I never heard — a doctrine concerning which, as it has revealed itself to me, I have often wondered how it would have affected my young mind if presented then ; whether it would have seemed too hard to bear, or whether, because so plainly true, it would have entirely met my need and appealed to me for a nobler living than the word I heard was able to inspire. That wonder I cannot solve, but the truth of the doctrine I cannot doubt.

That doctrine I hardly know how to put into words so as to clearly and justly express it. The simplest shape is perhaps as good as any. It is this: *Goodness must be paid for*. In other words, if we would be good, we must pay for the privilege. If we would consecrate our service unto the Lord, we must give up everything that is at variance with that. “Lovest thou me more than these?” the All-Blessed and All-Blessing One cries.

And yet, friends, not to mislead you by too sweeping a statement, I must add that I am not ready to assert that goodness can *never* be had without being paid for ; for that were to shut the door on the possibility of a vision opening to man which should clothe goodness with such beauty and delight as to make it thenceforth the first impulse, the only thing one would choose or seek, the

one way it would be natural to follow, and for which every other would be not only rejected, but turned from as a stupidity, a disgrace, a crime. That way — the way of the heavenly vision — ah! God forbid that any man should close. That truth I must affirm. It is the truth of the grace of God — of the gift of God. There lies the way of heaven.

Affirming this, then, to the full, keeping as wide open as I can that wondrous door unto the blessed life, I must still say that for myself, — and it seems to me for most others whom I meet, — it is true that goodness has to be paid for. By goodness I do not mean any transcendental thing, but simple honesty, truthfulness, modesty, neatness, sobriety, trustworthiness, kindliness, reverence, piety, etc. I know none of them that are wholly “without money and without price.” I see each one of them costing at times enormous money and a price as long as earthly life. Whether it shall always be so, we cannot know; but, so far as I can see, it is so now. And *now* Goodness is crying unto me, day by day, and in ever new situations, “Lovest thou me more than these?” Is it not also, friends, unto you?

No doubt we love it. We *all* love it. We cannot help loving it. It were unnatural, absurd, inhuman, to do otherwise. Every one of us would

say, and honestly, as Peter said to Jesus, "Thou knowest that I love thee." But oh! do we love it more than the things that call us away from it? Do we love it more than the creature comforts for whose sake we part with it? Do we love it more than the money whose price it is? Do we love it more than the ambitions, personal, social, or political, that require us to surrender it? Do we love it more than the life which sometimes can be kept only by its abandonment? If not, we pay it out for them. But if yea, we pay them for it. However this be, it is a price still, and the goodness is paid for.

Are illustrations needed? Life abounds in them. Only day before yesterday a new one came to me in the experience of a friend. A woman tried to wrong him by extorting money beyond what he owed. The note which apparently evidenced his indebtedness dropped on the floor while she sought for it. Unable to find it, she went to look elsewhere. It was in his power then to keep or to destroy it. Did he use that power? No. He suffered the wrong. He kept his honesty. Did he not pay for it?

The Roman soldier at Pompeii's gate kept his obedience. He lost his life. Did he not pay what men count a great price for that obedience?

A mother nurses her son through a long and

terrible illness. Worn out and broken down, at last she sees him come back to life. He is selfish and ungrateful—returns her devotion with neglect and desertion, more terrible to her than his death would have been. Does she not pay a great price for her mother-love?

An honest man goes into business. His neighbor, who is a knave, by adulterating and false weights, undersells him, and he cannot succeed. He pays for his integrity all the sad price that failure, so called, means.

Chrysostom, the golden-tongued, spoke the truth, denouncing sin in high places, and proved himself an apostle of righteousness. He paid for his brave loyalty by exile and death. "Preach against the sins of the time!" "Preach the truth that you believe!" cry many voices now. The preacher who will do that to-day will surely pay for it by making enemies and seeing empty pews instead of his people's living presence.

During the war we had an income-tax. Who paid it? The honest or the rogues? At the custom-house who pays the duties? The honest or the knaves? If all paid their just share, would not the honest men's be vastly lessened? The difference between what they pay and what they ought to pay is the price of their honesty.

A boy is charged with a wrong. A lie will save

him, or he can by a word divert the punishment to other shoulders. But he will not speak that word, and he will not lie. He takes the whipping. Is not his pain part of the price he pays for his truth and magnanimity?

Garrison was dragged through the streets of Boston with a halter around his neck. Lincoln bore a nation's sorrow, and died by the assassin's hand. Paid they not a great price for their humanity and patriotism?

You do a kindness long and large, which one would think would load its receiver with life-long sense of obligation. If, instead of your life-long friend, he becomes only not your enemy, do you not pay in suffering for the privilege of blessing?

You are generous. You give gladly to meet human need. Is not part of your pay a swarm of hungry cormorants [who will drain you of your very life-blood, if you will let them?

You are just. You find your friend doing a wrong. You go to him and quietly seek to save him from it. Is your pay a deeper, more devoted friendship? How often your friendship you pay for by seeing him become your enemy.

You have been tempted and have yielded to temptation. You long, you seek, to return to the path of temperance and self-control. Is not often your first pay a terrible onslaught of appetite, of

suffering, of pain? Surely before you get back to temperate manhood you pay well for it.

I might go on thus by the hour; but there is no need. The fact I speak of is plain enough. It will not let itself be put out of sight. And our wisdom is, frankly to acknowledge it and take its teaching home.

But have I stated the case fairly? *Is* not goodness rewarded? Is it not sure of reward always? Has it not great reward? Soberly and joyfully I answer, "Yes." And certainly with all my heart I want to answer Yes. But, friends, I wish not to mislead either you or myself. Certainly I wish neither to cherish nor to lead others to cherish expectations which may be disappointed. When, then, you ask, "Am I not going to be paid for being righteous?" while I answer, "Yes, you shall be paid; ay, it may be magnificently paid," the truth compels me also to ask, "Are you willing to pay for the privilege of righteousness? Do you love righteousness so well as to accept *it* as good pay? Do you love it so well as to be willing to follow it without hope of any other reward? If so, you shall be superbly paid, and I can point you here and now to at least the first installment of that pay. But if not, if you are good only because you hope to win happiness, favor, success, escape from danger, terror, and pain; to win heaven

and to avoid hell ; if you care nothing for goodness itself, — if you do not want it nor will turn your hand over for it, save for these ulterior ends, — then I cannot speak with the same confidence. I know not how to frame an argument which you might not find a bitter disappointment. I cannot lay my finger surely on any other reward that you would be certain to value. I cannot promise you money, prosperity, fame, friends, applause, nor even unqualified happiness. I can promise you nothing but goodness itself.” We have become so accustomed to the thought of goodness for the sake of reward, that our moral sense has grown weak and flabby ; we have lost our respect for goodness ; it has dwindled into a thing of price, whereas it ought to be above all price. “Buy the truth and sell it not.” Buy goodness, but oh ! don’t sell it for any price. Pay for it, but *take* no pay.

Well do I remember how eagerly in my boyhood I listened to the arguments of ministers trying to prove that goodness brought success and sin brought failure even in this world, and what a strange doubt and heartache they always left in me, as I looked around me in the church itself and in the society about me, and wondered, with misgiving, if these prosperous ones were the favored of God, and those whose way adversity attended were under the shadow of his wrath. I could n’t

say Yes ; so I had to ponder the bitter puzzle by myself. Oh ! had those ministers said, had they rung out, the simple blessed word, " Goodness *is* success, sin *is* failure, goodness is worth any price that man can pay for it, and that prosperity is dearly bought whose price is even a little sin," what a light, revealing and divine, would have flashed into my bewildered mind ! Nobly would it have solved one mystery, if also it introduced to my thought another and nobler. Better guests for the soul's hospitality are the noble mysteries than those that are not noble.

With the qualification thus presented I am ready to affirm that goodness shall be rewarded ; it may be magnificently, it may be in a kind and wealth of good overwhelming to the soul. *Shall* be, I say, not *is* ; I accent the word. It points to the future rather than to the present. And oh ! sometimes that future seems very far away. Think of that great Roman soldier waiting eighteen centuries for even the poor pay of having his obedience known on earth. But whether far or near, in the future the pay shall be.

" What ! " you exclaim, " *only* in the future ? not in the present, too ? " It may be in the present, but it is far from sure. Whether it be in the present or not depends on our own sense of values. If you value goodness itself as the supreme good, if

you cherish honesty, purity, justice, charity, etc., as beyond all price, then you get your reward at once, even now, even here, in this world. But if you value money, happiness, power, place, fame, advancement, above goodness, then, so far from getting the reward you wish for now and here, you may get something very different, even loss, pain, enmity, desertion, perhaps death. And if there be, as some say, no hereafter, your reward would be something like none at all; not one of the ends you sought for here, and no hope of any in the grave. The only present reward of goodness that comes instantly, that I know of and can surely promise, is itself — goodness itself. Its prompt and instant pay is always in kind. It is not even in happiness. It is not even in clear vision. It is not even in freedom from doubt and darkness and perplexity. It is not even in peace of mind. And certainly it is not in the love, the approval, the sympathy, the respect, the confidence, of others. All these are to come. Little by little, one by one, they will come in the long run, if the life but remain true. And when they come they shall bring the ample glory of the splendid day. That day will shine with love and honor, with words of reverence and thankful praise, with monuments of stone and brass, with shrines of pilgrimage, and — sweeter, mightier, more wondrous far — with

living shrines in the dear hearts of the innocent, the pure, the young, the good, who hope and pray in the sanctuary of their sweet souls for the reign of Love and Justice in the earth.

All this and more, far more, shall come — in the long run. That long run shall reach' through the centuries to pluck even an obscure and nameless Roman soldier's body from the ashes of his tomb, to set it "marching on" in the deathless procession of the heroes of humanity. What it shall do in the great hereafter to which we are all surely going, it is not given to man here to tell. But mighty souls, heroes of righteousness, saviors of men, revealers of God, stir our hearts with vast, deep words of promise and prophecy, to which the deep within us answers a great Amen. Here, however, and now, the first, the instant reward of goodness — ay, it may be for long the only reward we are aware of — is goodness itself, itself alone. Yes, and that goodness sometimes how soberly attired and how bitterly accompanied! Ay, worse than that, seeming to be such a *lonely* goodness as to affright one with the thought of being separated from his kind! Better, how many think, even going to do evil with friends and neighbors than to stand alone in being good. A voice comes, low, sweet, and pleading, but strong and clear with the unspeakable firmness of God, "Lovest thou me more than these?"

Friends, do you call this hard doctrine? Is it not true? Does it not fit the visible facts of life? Is it not tonic? And does it not sweep away the mists that obscure one of the puzzling questions? Jesus touched it in his almost grandest beatitude: "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be *filled*." Mark that great word well. It is not "made happy"; it is not "enriched"; it is not "rewarded"; it is simply "filled" — filled with righteousness, righteousness its own reward. And he added, accenting the truth, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Blessed Jesus! thou knewest that goodness must be paid for — ah! who ever knew it better? Thou paid'st the price. Thou didst accept it, though attended by poverty and grief, by loneliness, desertion — death. Thou didst bear witness to its worth. Thou madest deathless appeal to the divine in man, opening to him the way of salvation, the gate of eternal life.

Goodness, friends, has to be paid for. Still, sometimes it demands a seemingly prodigious price. With the leaden casket in the "Merchant of Venice," it says, then, "Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath." Every day its question comes, now in great shape, now in little, "Lovest thou me more than these?" and each time it calls

for worthy answer. That question is of the noblest. It honors us. It appeals to the man, the sage, the hero, the God within us. It ignores, it summons us away from the beast, the fool, the coward, the devil within us. O friends! shall we not answer it? — shall we not pray God for grace to answer it, — “Lord, thou *knowest* that I love thee!”

DEATH OF CHRIST.

DEATH OF CHRIST.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed." — Isa. liii. 4, 5.

WONDERFUL words ! From what prophetic depths do they come ! Who but a great poet could write them ? Who to-day can sound their meaning ? How living they are ! How near us they come in our need ! What strange comfort is in them ! Rooted in the far past, before ever Christ was, when only the need of him was felt, they have outgrown the Jewish life into which they were dropped, and in the new soil of Christian faith have bloomed a perennial passion flower, with nobler meanings than he who wrote them thought. Originally spoken of one less than Christ, they have come to mean Christ : to many they mean Christ only. With such force they speak that many, in view of the Man of Sorrows

that they portray, forget the Lord of Joy that Jesus as truly is. Such vitality is in living words.

They paint a picture of rare and pathetic beauty. If it mean not Jesus, whom can it mean? I once heard an artist say, when a visitor, charmed with the beauty of a face that he had drawn, wondered where he found such, "Oh! I see more beautiful faces on the street every day." By which I would suggest that even this beautiful picture need not stand for Christ alone. Meant for another, it stands for others as well as him. It portrays each one of that class of which he is the head, first-born, as the Scripture says, "of many brethren." Others have been in other ages and lands. Others are now. Others will be in coming days. They are so many that we may call them a class; so few that their charm can never die.

They are the men of simple loyalty to God, to whom God is the supreme reality, the best treasure, the joy above all other delights; who see and say that his righteousness is the one thing needful for all men, and *live out their teaching*. They are apt to be simple and childlike. Their pure atmosphere helps keep their sensibilities quick. The presence of God's great thoughts broadens their sympathies. Singleness of purpose makes their perceptions clear. And their devotion to righteousness opens to them another world

than that of common men. Hence they have ever been a suffering class — men “of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Trials have beset them. The difference between their ways and aims and those of the world has left room for failure, want, and misunderstanding.

Their troubles — the result of heroic attempts at utter faithfulness — men have charged to *faults*, and have esteemed them “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. Others’ griefs have been their sorrows. But keener sorrows they have found in others’ darkness into which they were forbid to throw light; others’ burdens which they could not lift; others’ sins not permitted them to prevent; and most of all by the evils blindly and passionately followed as though they were good. What suffering to see men cheated, lied to, and led by cruel selfishness to sure ruin and misery, and to be laughed to scorn for trying to save them! What suffering when, in pure love and hope of better things, “truths which men receive not now” are spoken, and are answered with hate, a prison, or a cross! And above all, when *friends* faint and fall away for fear, or grow cold or hostile because some higher thought or more searching word touches their selfishness or makes demands for which they are not ready, to see them join hands with the betrayer and smite with a kiss unto deser-

tion and destruction, — ah! who can tell the bitterness of that crowning meanness and cruelty? Verily,

“It was no path of flowers,
Through this dark world of ours,
Beloved of the Father, thou didst tread.”

No! in whatever age thou camest, whether in Pagan, Jewish, or Christian garb, men must say of thee: “He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquity.” Yea, they shall gladly add, “The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes are we healed.” For lives like thine can never die. Words that are spirit and life cannot be slain. The earth is their rich garden mould. The heavens are their whispering gallery. They shall spring as trees of God, whose fruit is healing. And even they who cursed shall speak them as the very life words of peace.

In all this, let us note, there is no hint of substitution. These high souls bear our sorrows, not in our stead, but in sympathy with us, in feeling for us. They are wounded for our transgressions because our sins wound them as well as us. There is no transfer of a sinner’s guilt or punishment to innocent shoulders. Such injustice cannot be. As Ezekiel truly says: “The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness

of the wicked shall be upon him." "The soul that sinneth, *it* shall die." And Paul reaffirms this same in his clear, ringing words, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." We shall not have one pang the less because such souls have suffered. We may have many the more, once we find what mischief we have wrought among the good and true through our reckless ill-doing. But these other sufferings, sweetly and bravely accepted and borne for us, accounted as nothing so that we may be saved, have another force. They cannot be met with stoicism or a curse. There is too much bravery and love in them for that. They put such a spirit to shame. They challenge us to as brave a loyalty; and thus, through the high appeal to what is best in us, "the chastisement" of these true souls works "our peace," and "by their stripes we are healed."

To-day begins what is called Passion Week, the week in which culminated in Gethsemane and on the Cross his suffering, who indeed "bare our griefs and carried our sorrows." That story of pain, shame, and love unspeakable — who can tell it? Well were it if each of us brought it home to himself this day as a living reality, and considered that but for sins which we share, and a love that we need, that suffering had not been called for, or, if called for, could not have been.

The passion and death of Jesus! Into what prominence it brings the mystery of innocence suffering for guilt — the good for the bad. Death — Jesus — how strange the words sound put thus together! As though that deathless soul could die! As though any could be found daring enough in evil to touch with hostile hand a hair of his head! Yet such there were, capable even of trying to destroy him. Did they indeed, as he divinely suggested, “know not what” they did? What comfort in that? The comfort of saving us from despair of any, even of such; and that is much. They who could do such a deed in full knowledge of what they were doing might almost be thought beyond all hope. Still, the fact remains that, in our ignorance, we may be misled into striking down even that which in our heart of hearts we most honor and love: a tragical fact, well worth our deeply pondering — a fact most solemnly accented by the death of Christ — a fact yet lying very near us all, for which we do not need to go to the mad fanatics of Jerusalem as illustration; for it is here to-day in our own republic, nay, in our own homes, in our own selves. Does it warn us of the danger of Ignorance? More impressively far does it warn us of the vastly more terrible power of Selfishness. The little finger of this power is mightier far for evil than all the full-

bodied strength of the other. Are we not through our little self-indulgences, through careless love of ease, through lazy neglects of duty, through putting private advantage before public good, and the like, ruining what we hold dear, — our church, our homes, the little ones who look to us, yes, the best and highest institutions of society? This is one teaching of the death of Christ. Has it not been proclaimed more than once in our dear land in fire and blood?

The death of Jesus was inevitable. This *we* clearly see. Though the world could not do without him, yet it could not tolerate one such as he. And yet some speak as though he did not see it! That deep prophetic mind not see so plain a fact? That clear eye so dull? Nay. When Grant proposed to the enemy at Fort Donelson to move immediately on his works, did he not *know* that it was at risk of death? If Greece could not suffer Socrates, could Jerusalem stand Jesus — Jerusalem, whose intensity was to that of Athens as a glowing coal to a flashing diamond? — Jesus, whose open assault, compared with the veiled attack of Socrates, was as the deadly strife of broadswords to the pretty play of fencers! Not know it?

“ Surely no man yet
Put lever to a heavy world ”

without swiftly finding it out. Had his eye read in vain of Moses whom Pharaoh could not abide, of Elijah hunted of Ahab, of Jeremiah persecuted nearly to death? He knew it well. He told it to others who could not believe his words. His experience is that of every age and all lands, and of almost all realms of human life. Even the church which boasts itself Christ's *one* representative on earth could not abide Wiclif, Huss, Luther, Cromwell. Could she even endure Galileo and Bruno? Could England stand Clarkson or America Garrison? Nay, the pure benefactor, the utter redeemer, must still take his life in his hand, prepared to lay it down.

But behind this second point, well worth our pondering, lies still another: *it was needful that Jesus should die*. His life had else missed its finest finish. Not because death is greater than life, nor that it is easier to live than to die. To the soul so true that for it "to live is Christ, to die is gain," to die is hard only when its work is not done or when it sees eyes beseeching the help which it longs to give. To souls not true, however, death is hard. To them death is a test severer far than life. With a mean thought of life, they look on whatever expresses the extreme of pain, solitude, and loss with chief dread. Bitter, shameful death does that. Dare you face that,

you have set to your word a seal which even they must respect. You are a true man then, proved by their sharpest test. For such, then, it was needful that Jesus should die. Was it not for them that he came and lived and labored — and must die. Did he not know it? How clearly it rings through those blessed words, “If I be lifted from the earth I will draw all men unto me!” *There was faith* in the attraction of the last self-offering, which set the seal on all that went before it.

Then it was *needful for his disciples that he should die*; else could they not truly know him. They were too near, and yet too far, to see him clearly; too near in body, too far in spirit. The magic of his presence, its luxury, its delight, its strength, they knew; but without his going they could not know how near he was to them, how he was *in them*, going whithersoever they went and never to be parted from them. They knew that *he* could do great works; but how until he went could they find that *they* could do “greater works”? While he lived they must be satellites of his — they could not stand alone. But through his going they should find that they could revolve in orbits of their own, and shed the light of his shining on regions which else it had never reached. And that shining was the shining of a divine ideal in human life, of a deathless hope, of a celestial prophecy.

Thus was it needful, for the completing of the Word God-given to Jesus to utter, that he should die. Death could not be required of him. He could, however, require it of himself as the result and demand of his great choice. He could require of himself to shrink from no bitterest test of loyalty to conviction, to his cause, to his lost and perishing brethren. Are not such deaths part of the glory of humanity? What could man do without them? What could our religion do without such? Is it not the one great highest point in which meet and are united all the poles of Christian thought and faith and testimony, so that, a perfect circuit made, through it can flow and glow all the electric wonder of the Christian life?

How high a testimony was given in his death to the aim and spirit of his religion! A testimony for all time! A testimony deepening as the ages pass! What a protest is his death against the sword and the fire of religious persecution! What a proclamation to the world that his aim is not military, not political, not material, not selfish, in no wise hostile to man! What an appeal to his disciples in all ages for self-offering and love, and not persecution and force as the true promoters of his religion! How little that divine proclamation and appeal are heeded! Have men forgotten that it is sufficient for the disciple to be

as his master, that he *must* so be, at least not be *unlike* his master? Think of a *church* claiming a right to slay, or to make lying professors of, those for whom Jesus died! And in his dear name! Against that lazy, deadly lie each passion week, with its sacred memory of the Crucified One, utters silent, bleeding protest. Ah! must not the blessed one himself, at sight of such perversion of his thought, again cry, as once he did, even weeping: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

We have seen some of the reasons why Jesus should die. They suggest some of those why the good must suffer for the bad. *Some*, I say—for who can tell all? Does not a sober mystery remain which man should meditate on but cannot solve?—one of the noble mysteries,—if tragic, yet bringing the mind into contact with divinest influences. For who is Jesus? And who are the good? *They* are embodied aspirations; *he* the promise of humanity—its prophet and its priest. They come in every age according to the need

thereof. He is once for all the highest in every soul—the divine in man. To destroy *him* were to destroy mankind's best Hope. To slay *them* were to bring mankind itself to naught. This is the dread double crucifixion attempted on Calvary. And why attempted? Why did sin and ignorance dare a deed so bad? Because the divine life could not and would not let men rest in ignoble peace. It disturbed their deadly slumber. It summoned them to life. It called them to liberty, not merely from tyrants without, but from the more fatal tyranny within. Therefore they struck—they thought they slew.

But instead of death, there came a glorious revelation of death-conquering Life. The good,—Christ,—could not die. “Dying, behold they live!” Purified by affliction, “lifted up” by death, shame they transform into honor, and change the ghastly cross into a shape of glory. Unconquerable and immortal they shine with inextinguishable light. How blessedly they thenceforth speak to the heart of man! Gladness they bring even into tears. The load of grief they lighten by a strengthening sympathy. Sin they shame at sight of the innocence it assails, and the virtue it would destroy, and the lie they show itself to be. To goodness they invite by the attractions of a love which no pain can daunt, no disgrace or loss

appall, and no depravity repel, — which will seek and save even that which was lost. Thus they bring to man a Hope triumphant over every earthly foe — a Joy that shines brightest in sorrow's darkest night — a Life that cannot die.

THE HELP OF SORROW.

THE HELP OF SORROW.

“Why weepest thou?” — 1 SAM. i. 8; JO. xx. 13, 15.

THRICE in the Bible is this question asked — once of Hannah, vexed by the teasing of an enemy who twitted her on account of her barrenness, and twice of Mary Magdalen at the tomb of the risen Jesus. A bitter grief lay on the hearts of both Hannah and Mary. In both cases that grief was to end in a great and noble joy. From that sorrowing woman was to issue one of the mightiest and best of the prophet judges of Israel; and the other's tearful search for the dead body of the Master was to be answered by the overwhelming joy of his risen and immortal presence. In Mary's case the glorious joy was at hand — swift answer to agonizing prayer; in Hannah's it was to come by and by, little by little, through the slow course of years growing unto its perfect end. To Mary it came so as to become at once distinctly visible; to Hannah, though coming surely, steadily, and recognizably, it was so gradual as to be easily lost sight of and

forgotten in the rush and press of the heavy current of daily life.

Here we have roughly epitomized the whole story of human sorrow. Sorrow! how bitter it is and how hard to bear! From what a multitude of causes it may spring! How various are its forms, how different the characters of those whom it visits, how noble and how ignoble may be its occasion, how disproportioned it may be to our anticipations! And yet, and indeed partly *because* of all this, we must think that at the heart of it is some great good. Whether that good come visibly at once or unfold into bloom after the lapse of long time, the heart of faith in man proclaims that it *must be*. As the great poet of humanity has it, stating the utmost case,

“There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out.”

It can do no harm to try “observingly” to “distil out” the “soul of goodness” — or rather a little of it, since none of us, I suspect, has alembic fine enough to distil it all, or perhaps even its best part — which dwells in human sorrow. And friends, to this let us *all* turn our thought, for it is a matter which concerns us all. Our very exuberance of gladness may overflow but to give place to more abundant tears. The brightest and cheeriest one

among us may to-morrow be the saddest. Life has its strange uncertainties. Tears are locked up in our very smiles. Happiness, gay-clad and lissome, often unbars the sombre gate of pain. In closest union joy and grief are blent. They give place one to the other as suddenly and swiftly as in yonder heavens the auroral flashes and the darkness of the night. Surely we *all* have an interest in finding what deep and blessed meaning must lie in the wondrous mingling and kinship of such seeming opposites.

The selfish and sordid mind recognizes no such meaning. It seeks only sweets. It will have its fill of pleasures only. Not daily bread, but daily cake it demands ; and when the inevitable spiritual dyspepsia which it thus invites has accepted its invitation and brought its dismal crowd of gloomy horrors, it frightfully atones for its refusal to recognize the good that lay in the bitter and the pain which it strove to put away.

The generous mind, the thought attuned to a higher than sordid key, strives after a larger and wiser apprehending. It cannot fail to see the intimate oneness in which smiles and tears and good and ill stand. It cannot but be struck by the care — the almost equal care — with which God secures to his children sorrow as well as joy. However dimly it discern, though it be through eyes

suffused with wondering mist, it will seek to grasp the higher thought — surely the God-thought, the thought not as man's thought — presented there. May it be that that thought shall make its blinding tears sparkle with the radiance of joy!

It is quite worth the while to pause a moment at this extraordinary fact of the well-nigh universal blending of good and ill, of sorrow and joy. A fact it is — a fact which we can neither escape nor set aside. Soon or late every one meets it. No position, place, career, or fortune is without it. It seems even to exceed the bounds of strictly human life. In a measure it reaches the lower animals. Beasts, birds, fishes, ay, even insects and reptiles, come within its scope. It seems very strange. We continually look for escape from it, and each apparent escape but confronts us with a new form of it. The solitary resorts to marriage to be rid of it, and lo! even his married bliss has its perils and its snares. The poor piles up wealth in sure hope of casting it off, and finds, as soon as he wins his richer brother's confidence, that he too bewails the troubles of his lot. The serf counts the crowned monarch happy amid his royal splendors; but how would he change his tone could he hear that monarch sigh, —

“What infinite heart's-ease

Must kings neglect, that private men enjoy!

.

And, but for ceremony, such a wretch,
Winding up days with toil and nights with sleep,
Had the fore-hand and vantage of a king.”¹

So it is ever here. Ever are the good and the evil blent. Will it be otherwise hereafter? In other words, will heaven bring immunity? We ask, but do we get any clear and decisive answer? One answer there is worthy of pondering: “The kingdom of heaven is within you.” Harmonize the discord within your own soul, make there the absolute good, and truly it is possible that the desired immunity may come. But if it come not there, the probability is that it will come nowhere. Is this hard? Does it make life an ill? Does it condemn the universe? If tempted to say “Yes,” pause a moment and ask if it really does. The supremacy of evil would. But does the blending of evil with good? Even though evil shared half the universe,—and it certainly does not more,—would not life still be worth the living? If one half of life is sure to be good, is not Life itself an absolute good? Certainly it is not pure ill; at the very worst it is only half an ill. If not an ill absolutely, it must be an absolute good.

And so in this absolute good we come to this extraordinary fact, that into it enter two opposing and yet blending factors—the light and the shadow, pleasure and pain, joy and grief, good and ill.

¹ K. Henry V. Act 4, Sc. 1.

How strange! How different from our thought and from our trained anticipation! It puzzles our will. We know not quite whether to rejoice or to fret at it, whether to accept or to protest against it. And yet there it is. And there it will be, fret, protest we as we may. And to it somehow we must contrive to adjust ourselves. And, indeed, even our short sight can discern how this mingling of opposites really doubles the possibilities of life, how vastly it increases the variety of life. Then what chances, what spur, what help, it gives to noble living! How fairly it enhances the beauty of the good! Ah! in these ways the very evil itself turns to good, even as a sharp spice gives sensible point to delicious flavors which else had passed unmarked.

In the noblest chapter of his master-work Carlyle makes his hero utter himself in the following magnificent strain: "Es leuchtet mir ein. I see a glimpse of it! there is in man a higher than Love of Happiness; he can do without Happiness and instead thereof find Blessedness. . . . On the roaring billows of Time thou art not engulfed, but borne aloft into the azure of Eternity. Love not Pleasure; love God. This is the Everlasting Yea, wherein all contradiction is solved, wherein whoso walks and works, it is well with him."

"A higher than love of happiness!" Ah,

friends, if there be not such *in you*, in every man, surely there may be such. And who is there with eyes to see the nobler things at all, that cannot see what a superbly nobler, serener, more beautiful, more godlike thing a life, a soul, shall be, inspired with that higher aim, than one whose be-all and end-all is enjoyment? How lifted such a life above the sordid, vulgar thoughts whose vile corruption daily offends our nostrils! How superior such a soul to the wretched passions, strifes, annoyances, and debasements that visibly degrade and spoil so many around us! Ah! that poor cheating hunt for happiness! That hunt, by God's providence daily and ever anew disappointed and brought to naught, — how common it is, and yet how impoverishing! How it takes the pith out of a man! How it seeks to collect about him all indulgences, ease, luxury, softness! How it strives to spare him all aches and pains and labors and difficulties! How selfish it makes him! How cold and cruel, how sensual and how coarse he grows! How indifferent and careless he becomes to the higher and only real things! How regardless, ay, how actually blind towards the rights and needs, the sorrows and sufferings, of others he gets to be whom it inspires! Ah! it is one of the desperate diseases which horribly curse our country, our world, our age. And if it could succeed in its work, how it would suc-

ceed in showing only what an utter failure is man. Truly the one good thing about it is, that it is so often a *hunt* and not a success — that its noblest success lies in its utter failure.

“Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast;
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men:
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the
maw-crammed beast?”

How benignant is the agency of sorrow in just this direction! It frankly faces man with the question of “Happiness or a Higher than happiness?” It strikes down his joy. It disappoints his delight. It removes his darling. It defeats his pride. His smile it fills with gloom. It challenges him unto tears. “Why weepest thou?” then it asks him; and in that question opens a very fountain of answers which he may ne’er have thought of before. Is it because his selfishness and pride are rebuked? Because he, who yesterday held high his head and proudly scorned his fellow-men as though somehow he led a charmed life and were beyond the reach of grief, suffering, or misfortune, now has found that he is merely one of the rank and file of the army of humanity, no better, no stronger, no wiser, than even the humblest of his

comrades—not even fit for the lowest office of command? Does he weep for that? Oh, sad tears! tears dropping on the most signal blessing of his life. For oh! is there for such a soul any one lesson more needing to be learned than that which instructs him how empty is pride and how low is the elevation which parts him from his brother? Without that lesson's thorough getting no noblest life, no life worth becoming immortal, is possible for him.

Or weapest thou because thine earthly goods have gone, and the pleasant things which they had to offer are thine no more? God's providence carefully secures that they shall go. Strange though the mystery, beyond thy comprehending though it be, yet there it is. But is it all? Thine earthly goods taken, is all taken? Oh! are not the best of all yet left—thyself—thy God? With those two centres canst not thou draw a curve within whose hyperbolic sweep, with its infinite reach and endless course, shall be included every possibility of blessing, an eternity of good? How have thine earthly goods gone? In ways that leave a blight, a canker, a weakness, in thy soul? Well, then, that thy disease is revealed to thee. In ways which leave no shame, no sorrow, no sting? Then art thou indeed not lost, but nobly saved unto a life—sterner it may be and harder, but perhaps

diviner far than that thou hast ever known. Oh, cling to thy faith in the living, loving God! Be sure of His unfaltering care for thee, and take thy cross and go to the noblest doing of the hard, glorious toil appointed thee! Verily thou shalt not fail of fit reward.

Or weepest thou because thy dear ones have gone from thee — because the ocean rolls its mighty loneliness between thee and them — because that darker ocean of Death, whose mysterious currents flow but one way and never return, has borne them hence, and thy longing heart aches for them in vain — or because a darker ocean still, of suspicion, distrust, selfishness, crime, hurls its noisome blackness, deadlier than death and deeper than the bottomless void, between thee and those that thou wouldst die to bless? Ah! here is challenge indeed to thy patience and faith, thy courage and hope. Here is the opening of the gates of prayer. Something here thou must have, higher and deeper than any food that feeds the body's hunger, something other and immeasurably better than gold, something that shall fill, sweeten, and gladden the fountains of thy life. There is a capacity, a need, revealed to thee which else thou hadst never known — and not in thine own soul merely, but, as thou art human, in all of human kind. Thou art brought into the presence of that vast higher want of the

human soul which but dimly and dumbly reveals itself in the movement of prosperous, happy life, and would never there reach forth unto its true and infinite supply.

Here, perhaps, is the great work of sorrow in the economy of human life. It nobly helps to bring man into clear view of his Great Want, and so it finely helps set human life to a higher than the common strain. Oh ! how many and beautiful are its ministries ! What a tender music it often brings into the voice ! what a mild beauty into the eyes ! what warmth and softness into the heart ! The memory — how choice it becomes under sorrow's pure influence ; the imagination — what fair and holy pictures weaving ; the feelings — how full of pity and a sympathy going out beyond the circle of private griefs ! What brotherhood man finds then in his fellow-beings — what childhood in himself, even in his proudest strength — what Fatherhood in God o'er all and forever. Truly,

“ 'T is sorrow builds the shining ladder up,
Whose golden rounds are our calamities ;
Whereon our firm feet planting, nearer God
The spirit climbs, and hath its eyes unsealed.”¹

Thus growing stronger and finer, more patient and humble, learning to exact less and to do and give more, the soul comes at last to the point where

¹ Lowell's *Death of a Friend's Child*.

it is able to face the great paradox of life and undismayed — ay, with joy, the joy of a quiet trust — to accept and grapple with the mystery of the blending of evil with good. And in the serenity of the God-given strength, more than equal to its need, it can sing : —

“ Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive.
A spark disturbs our clod
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives than of His tribes that take, I must believe.”

Such soul of goodness, it seems to me, we may find in sorrow, “ would we observingly distil it out.” In the griefs that befall us, strive we and pray that to this our eyes may not be blind, but may rather ever become clearer. To this end set we our lives to a noble strain, and look

“ Beyond the evening star,
Beyond the changing splendors of the day,
Knowing the pain He sends more precious far,
More beautiful than they.”

THE CONSIDERATE MIND.

BLESSED IS HE THAT CONSIDERETH.

“Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.”—Ps. xli. 1.

THE considerate mind is the subject and the aim which now invites our thought. Is he blessed that considereth the poor? Shall not he be yet more blessed that considereth whatever life brings? Not only shall the Lord deliver him in time of trouble for considering the poor, but the Lord shall also often deliver him *from* the time of trouble for considering many another poverty from which times of trouble spring. And, nobler than this, — for trouble shall come despite all precaution and forethought, — he shall not only be himself delivered from the real hurt of trouble, but shall have the greater blessedness of being able to guard others therefrom. And farther yet, to him shall be spoken truths and given revelations that shall not only yield an ever new and greatening vision of the universe, but put him into contact with the thought and life of those around him, enable him exquisitely to contribute to the comfort and happiness of fellow-creatures, and even clothe him with

the prophet's power to warn against and so avert widespread calamities.

Then in itself how beautiful is the considerate mind! What a dignity it has! How becoming to a man! Of all earthly creatures he alone seems largely capable of it. With what an atmosphere of power, with what a kind of awfulness, it clothes him who hath it! How strangely attractive it makes him! What weight it gives his speech! His lightest word has a force which even the strongest utterance of the inconsiderate lacks! How glad to secure his hearing are they who have anything to say! How promptly they bring forth for his inspection their best thought — thought jealously guarded from profane gaze! His position, his sphere, his attractions, his influence, his relations, his opportunities, are all different, radically different from those of other men. He has something of the higher quality of a living man. If others be dead while they live, he of the considerate mind lives and grows. This world, to others empty and barren, is full of meaning and worth to him. He has a wealth of resource which others lack. He learns differences between things, to others hid. Life offers him rich instruction. He has a safeguard in himself from many dangers. He has a power against which even the might of evil may rage and roar in vain. He, as none other, is master of his

situation — knows its difficulties, its dangers, its advantages. He then may even turn adversity into prosperity — like Sheridan at Winchester, snatching victory from the very jaws of defeat. And thus he may be and become anything that lies within the scope of human possibility, though to others, lacking or making light of this one grand attribute, such attainment be denied.

The considerate mind has all the good, all the power, all the enriching, which curiosity is supposed to furnish, without the pettiness, the selfishness, the vulgarity thereof. It will allow nothing to pass its thought without yielding first its central meaning and validity. And thus to the clear asking eye all things delight to show themselves in their true worth and quality; the estimate of values becomes different; last is first and first is often last; and even death to the considering gaze comes not as a dread enemy, but a delivering friend.

A friend once asked me what I thought the worst of sins. Not having held the question a profitable one, I had not seriously considered it, and had no answer ready. Were it put me now, my answer would be, "That which especially leads *you* astray." Returning the question to my friend, who evidently had considered it, I received the answer that he regarded thoughtlessness as the

worst. And surely he was not far from the truth. If it be not the worst, — and certainly it is not so deadly as selfishness, perhaps is less hurtful than indifference, — it plays with awful power into the hands of the worst. No ally of selfishness more potent than this. Nothing that gives indifference more effect than this. On nothing counts the despot, the conspirator, the secret traitor, more securely than on this. Wisely does Shakespeare make Cæsar, meditating the overthrow of Roman liberty, say of Cassius, “He thinks too much; such men are dangerous.” One of the most striking lessons of that wonderful drama (*Julius Cæsar*), and one surely of the gravest import, is that of national danger from popular thoughtlessness. How impressively is there displayed the readiness with which even a people will throw away its priceless liberties, forsaking its noble defender and yielding itself to a treacherous betrayer through sheer thoughtlessness. Is not this, alas! one of the chief banes of our republic to-day? Did our people consider what, in various cheating guises, is presented them for what it is not, would there be given the chance now possessed by the enemies personal, passionate, ecclesiastical, political, that, one day joining their now only seemingly detached forces, shall make a terrible assault on our cherished institutions? Would it be possible to cheat

and humbug the people, as now by political quacks, ecclesiastics, partisans, and plunderers they are cheated and humbugged? Twenty-six hundred years ago the great patriot-prophet, beholding the same thing in Israel, moaned, "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

Did parents consider, would they bring up their children in the loose, the reckless, the extravagant, the emasculating, the vicious way in which multitudes of them are—not really *brought up*, but growing up, full of bad habits, taught no good ones, loaded with wants but lacking ability to supply them, filled with notions which life's bitter experience must slowly and painfully destroy? Did they consider, would men and women, would *young men* and *young women*, give themselves to fashions and habits that distort the body, weaken the mind, poison the blood, and debilitate the will? Would they make themselves the victims of costly, unclean, degrading, and corrupting habits,—habits exposing all and leading multitudes to a life and death of shame and misery,—did they consider the meaning and danger of the deed? Would physicians be quite so free in prescribing intoxicants to patients, especially to young ones, as is now the fashion, did they consider the danger thereof? Would that terrible indifference whose

clammy finger lays blighting touch on the fairest, noblest, most blessed influence, killing the church or debasing by driving her to unhallowed and degenerate agencies to keep herself alive, breaking the hearts of earnest and devoted men who seek to build up right in society, to save men from vice and crime, to help the poor and protect the helpless, and reform the ways of society, and leaving unchecked every irruption of base and cruel agencies which go forth as raging lions seeking whom they may devour, — would this be the paralyzing power that it is, did men consider the meaning and purpose of religion, of morality, of the word and aim of the devoted and philanthropic men who seek to prevent or remove threatening evils and dangers and prepare for the coming of better days, and what help they ought to give them?

Is it not more than self-evident that but for thoughtlessness, selfishness and indifference would lose half, and the worse and more dangerous half, of their power? It is a fearful evil. It looks so guileless, it seems so innocent, so easy to say, *I did n't think of it*. Can any blame attach to one who "did n't think of it"? Ah! are there not things that one *ought* to think of? Is not man bound to think of them? When the steamer captain lays his ship's course by the compass, is he not bound to think of that variation of the compass, allow-

ance for which alone can save his ship from wreck? Was not the engineer of that fated train, over which impended a horrible destruction, bound to think, before lying down to sleep at his post, of the danger that therefrom might ensue? When the guide went up the Matterhorn with an old weak rope, by the breaking of which four brave climbers were lost down the dreadful precipice, was he not bound to think whether his rope was strong enough? What would a bank say to the merchant who failed to honor his note when due, *because he did n't think of it?*

These answer the question as to the moral evil of thoughtlessness. If man is bound to think of anything, if consequences dreadful to contemplate can be averted only by his not forgetting to think of it, if he can acquire the habit of remembering it, if he can justly be held responsible for failing so to do, — and certainly each of these is the case, — thoughtlessness can no more be pleaded in bar of punishment or blame than can drunkenness or malice. It can be pleaded only where through ignorance or unavoidable infirmity anything else could not fairly be expected. Excepting in such cases, “Why did n't you think?” is a proper question, and the blame and punishment involved in it are justly merited.

Let no one, then, shield selfish shortcomings be-

hind the veil of thoughtlessness. It may seem fair and white, but where it touches the skin it raises a blister. It is poisoned as the fatal Nessus shirt of ancient fable. Oh! the misery it has wrought — on its possessors arousing from their deathlike sleep to find how cruelly they have been mutilated and outraged, and on myriads of innocent victims of their unfaithfulness who have trusted and, all unintentionally, been betrayed. Hard is the lot of outright sin ; its punishment is sore. But how full of pang is that which, with no evil meaning, sees itself working the works of evil on those whom for the world it would not deliberately wrong, through sheer carelessness and want of thought. Fearfully true is it, as Hood has written in familiar lines, that

“ Evil is wrought by want of Thought,
As well as want of Heart.”

To what is thoughtlessness owing? A question easier to ask than to answer. One little piece of an answer let me now give. It may help to set the matter in its true light. It is owing to our not deliberately taking ourselves in hand and setting ourselves about gaining a habit of thoughtfulness. And with this selfishness — a selfish laziness — has much to do. Selfishness acts on a man's moral vision as a telescope on the physical. He expects that it shall magnify his power of

sight, but his first experience of it is to lose sight of almost all that he saw before. Instead of the whole heavens shining on him in enhanced splendor, and the whole view which his noble natural vision grasps at a sweep, taking a clearer exactness, in fact all is shut out except the little space coming within his glass's field. That little space indeed is magnified, but all the rest is hidden. Attention, eyesight, thought, all are concentrated and absorbed in that. It for the time is all in all. Though elsewhere the sublimest pageant that ever blazed upon the celestial vault or commanded man's admiring wonder on earth were taking place, to him it would be as though it were not. So is it with man's selfishness. This shuts out all that comes not into its little field of view. It is fatal to large thought. It is fatal to comprehensive views. It sees nothing but its own petty circle. It exaggerates that into an importance out of all proportion to its real worth. And worse than this, it exaggerates its own smallest self to a size larger than its largest. It will magnify some petty aim into the absorbing object of a lifetime's endeavor, blind, as though it were not, to even the grandest and most manifold attainment that can inspire a high ambition. Yea, it will magnify the moment's impulse, passion, desire, or mood into an all-controlling power, at whose behest all else must

be sacrificed. As that can last but a moment, its satisfying brings only life-long emptiness and regrets; for the good of that satisfaction is but momentary, while its evil is lasting—ay, sometimes manifold and irreparable, to others as well as ourselves. How often we see this! and in all spheres of life! Beautiful and noble things sacrificed, which no money can buy, which time even cannot restore, at the instance of some paltry caprice, some passing mood, some petty covetousness, some impulse, which over a considerate mind would pass as the ruffle of a breeze passes over a lake, leaving no trace behind, but which the inconsiderate thoughtlessness of a selfish mind makes devastating as a tornado.

How sadly in this wise suffers man's nobler being! Instead of his own best friend, how many a man is thus his own worst enemy! How sadly in this wise languish those institutions which one would think him most eager and faithful to cherish—their worst foe thus within their own household! How sadly thus are sold and betrayed those interests and ideas which are the very foundations of society, and without which freedom and free institutions must fall! How sadly thus is worship slighted and religion made of none account, and the love which should make divine oneness between man and man chilled, and the sweetness of home

embittered, and alienation sown where closest unity should be, and instead of a divine success there is pitiful failure. And to think that it all might be otherwise, the evil prevented, and glorious good take its place, would man but consider !

Oh, friends, be it not ours to make or increase this mischief ! Remember we always that we are bound to think ; to think of many things ; to think of many persons ; that thoughtlessness in regard to them is crime — crime sometimes more terrible and deadly than that of the burglar or the murderer. Learn we then wholly to avoid it — the earlier and the more thoroughly the better. Put we on the considerate mind. It will prove itself, despite its anxieties and pains and griefs, indeed blessed, blessed in happiness, blessed in good ; and “God shall save us” from “the time of trouble.”

GOD'S THOUGHTS.

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“How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God ! How great is the sum of them !” — Ps. cxxxix. 17.

GOD's thoughts, — the thoughts that God thinks, the thoughts that God gives, the thought of which God is the object, — of each of these may the text well be true ; but of all of them together is it not so deeply and richly true as to make it the natural outburst of grateful wonder and joy ? Verily God's thoughts *are* more precious to man than he often pauses to consider. For not only are they the shining jewels which adorn his life, but they are the very food by which that life lives. In them are the gladness, the strength, the light, the right, the peace, which make his life worth living.

What access have we to God's thoughts ? Who indeed are we that we should even think of such a thing ? When high authority¹ can say, “ We now know that our earth is but a fraction of one out of at least 75,000,000 worlds,” and one of us is but one out of innumerable millions of the inhabitants of this one world, the question comes back with

¹ Lubbock. Address at York, 1881.

overwhelming force. Let us be careful how we answer it. And let us remember that matter is not mind — I mean, of course, in the ordinary acceptance of the words. What at bottom either matter or mind is, man knows not, nor perhaps is likely to know. Into the secret places of God's mind, then, who can enter? That abode of God's thoughts is for God alone. Indeed, into the secret place of a *man's* thoughts none save God has entrance but by permission ; and that permission is, and ever must be, only partial. But besides the *secret* place of God's mind, there is also the *open* place, where His thoughts are revealed and may be clearly read by seeing eyes. They confront us everywhere. Nowhere can we turn our gaze that they do not throng upon us. "New every morning," they are fresh every evening. We know and we know them not. Every one of them is so compact with other thoughts, that the moment we begin to find its contents, even the oldest becomes the newest, and the most familiar as though we had never seen it before. There seems no end even to those within our reach. Were we to labor for a million ages at nothing else than simply to discover and study these, their unexplored number and greatness would only rise on us in a mightier vastness and sublimer meaning.

What an august and wondrous thought is that

which astronomical science opens to us, of a universe of millions on millions of worlds! Verily, "How great is the sum thereof!" Is the thought in its own way any less wondrous which Mr. Darwin unfolds to us in his story of the worms? Who can tell the sum of that? Follow Professor Gray as he shows *How Plants Grow*. Trace with Haeckel the development of life from earliest moneric forms unto fully realized plant, animal, man. See with Fraunhofer how microscopic black lines become declarers of the constitution of suns and stars so far away, that the light which left them ages before man began has not yet reached our earth. Having done all this, you have but begun to trace the outlines of some of the thoughts of God laid open to our view. Besides these there are all the worlds of mineral, mechanic, chemic, physical, animal, and — crowning all — *human* life, each one crowded with thoughts of God. Truly, as the psalmist says, "If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand."

In our own little personal sphere, do we not sometimes meet, or know, or read, or hear of personalities who seem so high and noble, so pure and true, of influence so fine and altogether worthy, that we almost involuntarily think of them as pure thoughts of God? They hardly seem made of mortal clay. They are *not* of mortal clay. The

mortal part is not that which attracts or holds us. In fact, we scarcely think of their mortal part at all. The immortal, the so-called spiritual, is what impresses and controls us in connection with them. Jesus is eminently, supremely such an one. Buddha must also have been such. Ah! who has not heard of human households that have been blessed with such? They cannot so much be said to *have* power, as to *be* pure powers. Of power they seem to be compact. So powerful are they that there is no need for them to *use* force or assert force; they *are* force, force so great and pure that even in gentlest expression it is unresisted and irresistible. Even rude and violent natures acknowledge and bend to their sway. Of such our own Channing was a striking illustration.

Yes, thoughts of God there are in endless number open to man's view, inviting man's careful study. True thoughts are these—with the veritable power of thoughts to realize themselves in living form; not, like so many human thoughts, mere vagaries, idle dreams, but spiritual powers working all the wondrous results which creation shows. They are everywhere,—in the heaven above, in the earth beneath, in the depths of the sea, in the invisible spaces of air and ether, in living worlds and in dead worlds,—ay, we cannot be where they are not. And they are fountains

of wonder and joy. They are the light of life. In them is inspiration, strength, defense, power. They reveal the patterns which God sets "in the mount" of his revelation. By them man grows. The sum of them is beyond all computing.

Great and manifold and fascinating though these be, not chiefly on them would I now dwell. Other thoughts there are well worth our noting: even the thoughts which God gives. In a sense it may be said that all thoughts are God-given, inasmuch as only through Him could man ever think at all. And truly what wondrous things thoughts are, whether bad or good! Invisible, and yet charged with what tremendous power! It is the shallow fashion of shallow and materialistic minds to talk of deeds as though they were everything, and to sneer at faiths, beliefs, thoughts, as though they were nothing, — at least nothing in comparison. Deeds *are* important. Be their importance allowed to the very uttermost. And even then it may safely be said that that importance is fully matched by that of the thoughts men think, the beliefs they hold, and the faiths that have hold of them. No thoughts — no deeds; low beliefs — low deeds; high faith — deeds that make man sublime and show forth his immortality: — of such superior and vital importance are those unseen and unseeable entities which we call faiths, be-

liefs, thoughts. Why, friends, is it not manifest that even delusions, vain imaginations, dreams, have enormous power over human doings? Is it not because the faith and courage of the great American nation are low indeed, that its Congress, forgetting the blasting curse of one delusion, from which our land was freed only by civil war, gravely struggles with another, more disgraceful because not inherited, but deliberately adopted in the face of great light, and, in defiance of the teachings of bloody experience, fears and prohibits the coming to our shores of a peaceful race that have already brought great benefits, and, nobly treated, might bring unspeakably greater, making the deserts, ay, even some of our moral deserts, to rejoice and blossom as the rose? No, quite as momentous are the thoughts men think, the beliefs they hold, the faiths that hold them, as the deeds they do. Indeed, not the lightest influence of deeds is that which they exert in moulding men's thoughts, beliefs, and faiths. A single new thought may modify all the subsequent deeds of a man's life: how much more a new belief, a changed faith.

Of what moment, then, that a man's thoughts be good. All good thoughts are God's thoughts: not necessarily because they are *about* God,—they may or may not be about Him; indeed, thoughts may be about Him and be very bad,—but be

cause, whatever they are about, they are *good* and not bad. That is a good thought which exactly fits the highest need of every time. Is it a time of perplexity, that is the good thought which clears up the perplexity. Is it a time of despondency, that is the good thought which brings wholesome cheer. Is it a moment of terror, that is the good thought which puts courage into its place. Is weakness on you, that is the good thought which makes you rightly strong. Are you selfish, that is the good thought which shames the selfishness and substitutes for it magnanimity. Are you mean, that is the good thought which makes meanness give place to generosity. Are you conceited, that is the good thought which makes you humble. Thus good thoughts are wise thoughts, true thoughts, pure, kindly, generous thoughts. They are thoughts that busy themselves with worthy objects and address themselves unto right and wholesome ends — thoughts that make one involuntarily bless the Lord. They may be large — they may be small — what matter? A trip hammer may be needed to make a steamship's shaft; but if a splinter be in your finger, a needle is better. That is beautiful which fits its time; and that which fits not its time is in the way, however good in itself it may be.

How good among good thoughts are those which fit, not one or two occasions only, but many! And

of all thoughts those are best which have all times and all places for their own. Glad thoughts which make the face to shine and put music in the voice — how wide is their domain! how good they are! The thoughts which keep us close to righteousness, making temper sweet and the tongue true and patience strong and the hand ready for every good work, and that ward off the assaults of every kind of sin — is not their time every time and their place exactly that where we happen to be? Verily, precious are thoughts like these. Their sum none can tell the greatness of.

How rich is he who has good thoughts. Thoughts as *possessions* I speak of now. There is no movable personal property to compare with them. No thief can steal them. They are the furniture of that house in which, more than in any other, every soul lives — the house of his own inner being. They form the pictures on its walls. They make its atmosphere. According as they are shall it be, — bright, happy, beautiful, fit to live in, hospitable or forbidding, sweet or foul. His thoughts are a man's companions — his bosom friends, his bosom foes. How important that they be good. Like other companions, they assert their rights. They cannot quite be put in or out at pleasure. If the dying Channing was overcome by the weight and number of noble thoughts that crowded on him,

bearing a blessing almost too great to bear, ah! how the dying sinner sometimes writhes under the curse of the horrible presence of thoughts from which he has no power to flee.

Thoughts germinate. They grow into habits. They bring their own with them — as it were, their relatives and kindred to live with them. The terrible parable of the swept, garnished, and *empty* soul has its key here. Put for “spirits” “thoughts,” and it will be plain. The evil thought, once a guest, prepares the way for other and worse thoughts — its kind, its fruit, or its kindred. Look well, then, to the thoughts you are thinking. They tend to make the seeing, the feeling, the hearing which are native to them. They are as spirits. Their influence will pervade and qualify the whole inner being. And then they issue forth in deeds. Such is the law. Only through their being good can all else be good. How blessed to have such, and only such; to walk with such all the day and every day; to retire with such at the close of each day’s labor; in intercourse with such to spend the secret hours of the inner life; with such as our guardians to lie down to rest; with such as our protectors to go forth to life’s battle. More invulnerable than Achilles, by the goddess empanoplied for the fray, is the mind by pure thoughts made inaccessible to temptation; secure,

indeed, for it cannot be misled, deceived, or betrayed.

Of all thoughts what can compare with that whose centre and circumference is God? The thought of God Himself—has it a peer? I speak not now of belief in God, nor of faith in God, but simply of the thought of God. *They* have their own glorious virtue. But *it* also has its. It is the condition without which they could never come into consciousness. It is the blessed seed of which they are the natural fruit. They? Yes, but oh! how much more than they! Verily, it is the thought of thoughts. It is the mother-thought—that from which all other good thoughts spring. Think about it for a moment. Ask just the one question, “Whence came it?” Ponder that question. Answer it if you can. Easy enough to say where you and I get it. The Bible is full of it. Every church in the land attests it. Our daily newspapers have it. Perhaps from dear parents’ lips our baby ears first drank it in. The very oaths men profanely swear speak it. But where did *they* all get it? Where did the first mind that ever had it get it? No man could invent it. No outward eye ever saw God. No human mind ever did or could take the measure of God. No mortal life ever could realize the holiness, no finite spirit trace the infiniteness, of

God. Where, then, did man get the very thought of God? The only answer I know how to give is, "From God Himself." For me the very thought of God is the self-evidence of God. And it is so none the less whether it flashed sudden, lightning-like, upon the soul of one man, or rose slowly like the dawn on many, until at last, a bright day, it became the clear possession of them all.

However it came, once it came, the thought of God came with power. Though only a thought, still a thought it was. A thought may become a revelation; it may become an explanation; it may become a desire — a challenge — an inspiration. And *this* thought, once it had come, could be nothing less than the commanding thought. It might meet faith; it might receive denial; but whatever it did, it had power. And that power could not cease nor fail until all its life was received and exhausted. How significantly true here Bryant's word: —

"Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers."

It of course would command deepest and most eager questioning. Around it, as around none other, would gather the wish, the hope, the interest, not only of the human *mind*, but of the human *conscience* and the human *heart*. The moment

man saw it he could not but hope that it was true. All of great and good within him would naturally flame up in its presence. Order would come at once into all his universe. A mighty meaning, none the less felt for being very dimly seen, would penetrate all life. A wondrous presence not to be put by would thenceforth confront him everywhere. And as time passed, and more and more that great thought emerged from the dimness of its early dawning, and its moment got seen, and its power felt, and the true sense of it became plain, and the mind saw in it the idea of an absolute Justice, a Purity that could not know stain, a Truth beyond all failing, a Beauty such as eye had never looked upon, a Goodness utter and a perfect Love,—that these were all in one being, and that Being was eternal, infinite in power, everywhere present, knowing all things and ruling all,—is it wonder that in its appreciative moments it should cry, in language not to be suppressed: “How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!” For once a soul rises even to this vision, it sees that it is but at a mighty magnetic centre, into which what a throng of other precious thoughts press, and around which what an endless succession revolve—thoughts of wonder and beauty, of joy and inspiration, that are as eyes to the blind and feet to the lame, that bring quiet

unto grief and soothing unto pain, that make courage heroic and endurance strong, that, beside their glorious uplifting and their marvelous outlooking, fit with exquisite niceness into every exigence of human life, righting wrong, making darkness light, through death shining with the brightness of immortal life.

Remember, I have been speaking of the thought of God — not the belief, not the faith, not the love of God. Did not he speak worthily who said, “How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!” And was he far wrong who sang: —

“Only to sit and think of God,

O what a joy it is!

To think the thought, to breathe the word,

Earth has no higher bliss.”

LONG LINES.

LONG LINES.

"The thing was true, but the time appointed was long." —
DAN. x. 1.

"In these is continuance, and we shall be saved." — ISA.
lxiv. 5.

GOD lays down man's life on lines of enormous length. Let man follow Him in so doing as far as he possibly can. Lay out your life on long lines. This is the true way of success. It may explain many of the tragic-seeming mysteries of life. Let me try to set forth my point.

If you would build a ship, you would lay down lines as long as the vessel's utmost length and breadth and depth. You would not think of laying such as would only fit a dory; nor, in building a house, would you begin with ridgepole and chimney-tops. You would not even begin upon the surface of the ground. That, you would say, might do for a shanty or a shed, but not for a dwelling for a home. For a home you would first make a plan that met your want. Then you would lay down your lines; and even then you would not

build but *dig*. Whatever else you did, you would first dig *down*, not build *up*. And you would dig not only for cellar, foundations, and walls, but drains and trenches for water, gas, and even electricity. But besides digging you would also *gather* many things that at first seem needless, but afterward prove necessary. You would prepare beams and rafters and planks and boards, doors and mouldings, sashes and mantels, and innumerable other things which in themselves look little enough like a house, and yet are needful to it. Thus you would prepare, and the better the house was to be, the more complete and careful would be the preparation. Then what? Would you build? Yes. But how? Would it not be by beginning at the very bottom? Not even would the lowest stones of the foundation walls be laid first. Even below and by the side of them would you have provision made for their safety and for drainage. Then come the foundations and the higher walls, floor beams and frames and partitions, — all and each in due order. But this would be done, not in a moment, but gradually and slowly. Bit by bit, here a little, there a little, stone by stone, brick by brick, beam by beam, board by board, lath by lath, — and never the second until the first was placed, — would it go on to completion.

Thus it is in building a ship or a house. So is it with building any other worthy thing. Indeed, the same is partly true even of base and bad things, if these are to have continuance. It is, however, especially true of all *worthy* things. None of these, save by God's grace, can be won but by hard digging and large, patient, thoughtful preparation, followed by continuous labor. Supremely is this true of the best and fairest of human creations — a high character, a noble, a divine life.

All noble acquirement is long. This is one of its grand, life-giving, saving characteristics. Do you think that you can easily and in short time learn what you want to? Do you, for example, think that you can soon learn to keep house well, to cook well, to sew well, to take care of children well, to buy and sell well, to build, drive, or play the flute well? You cannot. To do any of these common things well needs time—it may be much time. To do more than one, to do many of them well, needs a great deal of time. There is much to learn in each of them, a fact which soon becomes plain once you try to master any one of them. How many learn even to *read* so well that all can clearly hear and understand? How much work there is in learning even to *speak* so well that your neighbor shall not have to ask you to repeat your words!

How very few there are who do either of these things well! And yet surely both are well worth doing. I have looked with wonder on a laborer swinging his heavy sledge hammer an hour at a time and striking, with never a mistake, the iron drill which another held. Had he missed a single blow, he might have smashed, beyond all chance of healing, the hands that held the bar. Yet blow fell after blow, day after day and week by week, and never a miss. You or I could not without long labor do that. So you may go through the whole vast realm of human activity and find it everywhere the same: *long* practice is required for skillful attainment.

But what I would especially accent is, that all *high* attainment is long. There is no short way to it. The shortest way is long. A beautiful reason for this I shall name by and by. Just now let me ask you to read in it a clear sign of man's immortality. Let us, however, I beseech you, take home to ourselves the fact. A weighty fact it is. Perhaps we fret against it, and wonder if we cannot in some way get round it. We travel by steam; we talk and hear by electricity;—cannot we do everything else, and especially every long thing, at a like speed? We cannot. A calamity it would be if we could. Some things we can, and probably we shall find more; but only those whose

attaining takes more than needful time now. Obviously those which take their natural and necessary time now, cannot take less. A tree — a grand oak-tree, for instance — cannot be grown in even a human lifetime. A child cannot reach maturity within twenty-one years. A night's sleep requires the night to do it in. Once health has been lost, what a long, slow matter its regaining is! Once an evil habit formed, what a long fight one must make to conquer it! And so in common things: a farmer must wait long for his crop, a student for his knowledge, a young physician for his practice, an ambitious man for his renown. But it is particularly the case with all the higher things. The love and honor of mankind, for instance, can come only as the reward of long and varied service. A large and rich experience cannot be gathered save in a long time. That wisdom which the writer of Proverbs calls "The principal thing" is not possible except through knowledge, experience, judgment — all of them long in their demand on time. So might I go on through an immense variety of illustrations, all bearing on the same point, and proving that while some things may be shortened, long lines alone are possible for other and the greatest things. One illustration more I must name, — the illustration of illustrations, — a rounded, fulfilled life. That needs certainly a *life-*

time. Create it in any shape you will, the need can be no less. Indeed, even a *full* bad life needs it; but how truly does a rich, ripe, good life! Verily, —

“The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight.
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.”

Is not the obvious moral of all this that with which we began, Lay down your life on long lines?

“But what a tedious prospect!” I hear some one suggest. “Cannot we do all upon short lines and have them swift, sharp, and soon over?” Let us rather answer than blame the question. And the answer will depend on your own wish. Do you wish a grand lengthening out of existence, a large opportunity for beautiful growth and triumphant activity such as shall make life divinely worth living? How can you have it if life is laid on short lines? How can it be so well done as through those things that have “continuance,” as the text says, the term of which is long? How else can even the shortest time be so well filled — its minutes

“Thronged gloriously
With business how divine?”

Is that a worthy use of time which is implied in the phrase “A short life and a merry one?” Does

not such rather, like the prodigal, feed the swine than build the man? Man is made for long and great even more than for short and small enterprises. They give coherence, steadiness, grandeur to life. They afford continuous, absorbing, delightful employment. They enable man to grow to the height of which he is capable. What a superb protection they are from mean and base ways and temptations! They *reveal*, because they *create*, great men. Think of great Agassiz, with "No time to make money." Think of the more than thirty years it cost Grote to build his superb immortal monument, his History of Greece, — in his own lifetime a classic. Think of the toil, the reading, investigation, thought, study, involved — and the joy, the safety, the benefit, the fullness of life it brought him. Think of Copernicus, after thirty-six years of intense study, in which "the labors of the observer and the calculations of the mathematician were combined with the sagacity of the philosopher," reaching the goal which he thought at first he saw but only thus could attain. Think of Kepler, stretching out his hand to grasp the laws of the planetary motions, and after seventeen years of absorbing toil gaining his great end, accenting still further the long lines of high attainment by his remark concerning the book promulgating his discovery, "It may well wait a

century for a reader, as God has waited six thousand years for an observer." Think of Garrison, giving himself in his young manhood to the apparently hopeless task of emancipating the slave, and reaching his end at last, through appalling dangers and difficulties, in about a third of a century.

These are conspicuous illustrations; but there are countless others, not known to fame, in every walk of life. No matter how lofty, no matter how lowly it be, in every one the same slow but sure advance is possible. Cannot even the dullest see what a help is here to the best life? Cannot all see what a steadiness it gives to life, what continuous occupation it secures, what protection against idleness and temptation is in it, and what a chance it offers of reaching the highest attainment?

If added proof be needed, look at the opposite side of the picture. Could everything that it now takes years and lifetimes to do be done in a moment, men would die of *ennui*. The charm of life would be gone. They would die for want of something to do. There would be no distinction between great things and small. How awfully exposed would mankind be to temptations from which steady work now saves them!

Short lines for long things are indeed lines of

destruction. Your swift housewife is apt to break all the delicate and pretty things on the mantel-piece. Your swift money-getter is pretty sure to be a rogue. As a general rule there is no honest or safe road to swift material success. Napoleon I. is said to have made his swift marches at cost of five hundred men a day. Speed uses up power rapidly. Only very great force can stand it long. Your *very* swift workers die young, or else break down and are lost to the world, if not a burden on it. Then who does not know how easily what comes swiftly is apt to go? Swift knowledge is usually short and narrow and ill-digested knowledge; and how quickly it is forgotten! "Easy come, easy go" is a proverb.

Let me not be misunderstood. I am not pleading for slowness or laziness. I am pleading rather for thoroughness and excellence. There are swift results which are good. There are persons who can work swiftly and well, but they are the exception, not the rule; and where they exist it is for them to strike higher and to aim at larger results than are within common reach. It is not for others to ape their swiftness where it is only aping and not reality. If they do, it is at cost of destruction and loss of force, of character, of all the many benefits attending the Long Way for which I am speaking. Short lines are for short things. For such only

are they good. But for long things long lines. *In them is continuance*, and ye shall be saved.

Lay down, then, for yourselves long lines. Avoid trying to do up things in a moment. Do what is yours to do in the very best and most thorough way. Give the time needed for its perfect doing. Give yourselves to long and noble things: if to business, to that honest, pure, upright business which shall be not only a life-long employ, but an honor and a blessing to you and all; if to housekeeping, to that beautiful and perfect kind which shall not only keep a house, but make a home — a long kind to learn, but a life-long good when learned; if to mastering a trade, to that grand style of mastery which shall make your trade an ever-advancing progress, and turn every pair of shoes you fashion, or house you build, or machine you construct, or book you bind or print, into a real and honorable work of art; if to acquiring knowledge or a science or a profession, to that command of it which shall so enrich your mind and thought and purpose as to lead you into broad views, unselfish aims, and the spirit of noblest and humblest service.

All of these are long, and demand patient labor and steady consecration; and each will give an object to strive for, a useful place in the world, occupation, and that salvation which both saves

what is done and saves the doer. And if you find that the one you fix on comes easily, then do it more thoroughly. If you have a genius for gaining wealth, for instance, then set that genius to work to win it in ways still nobler and finer than those chosen before, — more closely approximate to the perfect rule of Honor and Right, — and thus show how exalted money winning may be made, and raise the standard of the pursuit of wealth. Have you a faculty for swift acquisition of knowledge or skill, then enlarge your range, make your knowledge and skill more exact, — exactness of all acquisitions is of the rarest, — and do what you may to elevate the standard and show men a new ideal and possibility. Never allow yourselves in carelessness or slovenliness. They are abomination. Strike high. Strive for the best. Be sure that there is a higher. Humbly and always aim at that.

Lay down, then, long lines for your own life. In them is continuance and ye shall be saved — saved from idleness, from waste, from emptiness, from sin. They are the lines of the eternal life. They are the lines of all noble attainment, of useful, happy, beautiful living. Do not be discouraged that in a moment or a day so little comes to pass. Be patient. Bide thy time. Only press on. Though with smallest steps, press on. A lifetime is before thee. A life work is given thee.

Said General Grant in a letter to his father, "We have advanced a quarter of a mile to-day and shall not go back." In the uncertainty of the perilous hour his father said: "Ulysses will take Richmond, for when he was a boy he had a mighty gift of continuance." He did "*not* go back." In him was continuance, and he and we, the nation, and the liberties of mankind were saved. Oh, young men and young women, let me remind you that there are other Richmonds to be taken than that behind whose walls Lee's army lay, the way to which is longer and through an even more rugged seeming Wilderness than that through which Grant and his brave soldiers struggled. Of several I have spoken. Every high and noble attainment is one. But there is one of which I have not spoken — one which overtops, exceeds, immeasurably outruns all the rest — the Richmond of personal holiness, of the highest virtue, of rounded, healthy, complete manly and womanly life. The way to it is long — longer than to any other attainment. But every step of that way, however short and however slowly won, is fraught with blessing, and each grows richer than the one before it. Their blessing is not private only, but universal. All good things and all good people join in saying of them, "In those is continuance and we shall be saved."

Make, then, that Richmond yours. Lay your life on its long lines. Fight it out on those lines. Whatever wilderness may intervene patiently traverse. Close in around your Richmond until it yields. Then will you achieve a victory which shall be the victory of mankind.









